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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD:

AN ESSAY

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BY

AUGUSTUS S. WILKINS, M.A.

(*Univ. Lond.*)

BACHELOR SCHOLAR OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
AND PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN OWENS COLLEGE, MANCHESTER.

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Ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν χριστὸν .....
σοφίαν θεοῦ δύναμιν καὶ θεοῦ.

TO THE

REV. JAMES BALDWIN BROWN, B.A.

OF CLAYLANDS CHAPEL, KENNINGTON,

IN GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REVERENCE,

I OFFER

This Essay.

PREFACE.

THE following Essay was written in the Long Vacation of 1868, as an exercise for the Hulsean Prize in the University of Cambridge, adjudged to it in the Easter Term of the present year. It is now printed, with the exception of verbal alterations, just as it then was written; partly by reason that new duties leave me little leisure to expand it to anything like completeness; partly too because I venture to hope that even within these narrow limits I may have succeeded in stating at least the principles that guide us to the solution of one of the most pressing questions of the day, even if I have not found myself space to examine their working in greater detail. The present and immediate importance of the subject with which I have here been trying to deal, cannot be doubted.

A writer in a recent number of *Fraser's Magazine* (is it the editor himself?) has plainly and forcibly put this forward in a notice of Mr Lecky's latest work:—a work which has appeared since this Essay was composed, and which seems to me to be quite singularly written *about* the question and not straight at it[1]. Is it, or is it not the case, that at the beginning of the Christian era there was such a radical change wrought in the light and life of the world, that the laws of strict induction require us to suppose for its production a cause distinctly superhuman? I have tried in the following pages to give my reasons for believing that the Christian ethics so far transcend the ethics of any or all the Pagan

[1] The exhaustive manner in which the ground had previously been worked by others seems to have left but little room for the wealth of new illustration, which formed so striking a feature in Mr Lecky's earlier work. 'The History of European Morals' has furnished me with no facts that were not to be found in the usual authorities: and the most valuable of these, the German, do not appear to have been employed at all. I may take this opportunity of mentioning what I have done with regard to a difficulty which presents itself, I suppose, to almost every writer. References to the classical and patristic authors I have in many cases borrowed without acknowledgment from writers like Zeller, Pressensé and Döllinger: but I have throughout avoided most carefully those second-hand quotations of modern authors that gain for too many writers a cheap reputation for width of reading at the expense of all sensitive honesty.

systems in method, in purity and in power, as to compel us to assume for them an origin, differing in *kind* from the origin of any purely human system. I believe with De Pressensé, that 'one resurrection at least cannot be denied; the resurrection of the world;' and that must carry with it the Resurrection of the World's Redeemer.

The instances of the suspension of the laws of nature supposed to be involved in the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation are presenting very serious stumblingblocks in the way of many earnest seekers for the Truth. The rejection of this belief, the very sheet-anchor of hope for the church and the world, involves the hypothesis of a no less miraculous suspension of the laws that rule in the world of mind. If the need of an adequate cause for the appearance of a phenomenon be held to exist as fully for the spiritual as for the material, then it is no longer a question of Faith or Reason which divides the Christian and the unbeliever. It is a question whether the canons of a rigid induction shall or shall not be followed for mind as well as for matter; whether we will test all truth, or only the lower and less important, by a strictly scientific method.

The present subject possesses one special attraction. It rises into regions high above the jangling and dissonant turmoil stirred by the party-conflicts of the various members of the One and undivided Church. Catholic and Protestant, Anglican and Independent, may at least unite in the confession that light and life can come to them only from faith in the Lord in whom they are one. They may rejoice together that for many, to whom He is not all that it is their deepest joy to believe Him, He is yet in no unreal or meaningless fashion, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And they may think together with shame, how far, far sooner the world had been brought to Him, had they shown more beautifully in their daily lives how He was to them 'the wisdom and the power of God.'

To those who have helped me in various ways in writing this little Essay, I offer my sincerest thanks. To the Rev. Prof. Maurice I am indebted for personal kindness, in addition to the helpful guidance I have found in several of his books. In common with so many students in the most varied fields of literature, I have to thank the Rev. J. E. B. Mayor for valuable suggestions, especially as to foreign authorities, and

for yet more valuable encouragement. My debt to the Rev. J. Baldwin Brown in this, as in everything that I think or write, I cannot consent either to omit to mention, or to speak of here more fully:—οὐ γὰρ λέγω ὅτι καὶ ἐμαυτὸν προσοφείλω.

OWENS COLLEGE, MANCHESTER,
October, 1869.

The Rev. John Hulse directed that the following clauses from his will should always be prefixed to the Hulsean Dissertation, 'to the intent that the several persons, whom it might concern and be of service to, might know that there were such special donations or endowments left for the encouragement of piety and learning, in an age so unfortunately addicted to infidelity and luxury; and that others might be invited to the like charitable and, as he humbly hoped, reasonable and useful benefactions.'

He directs that certain rents and profits be paid to such learned and ingenious person in the University of Cambridge, under the degree of Master of Arts, as shall compose, for that year, the best dissertation in the English language, on the Evidences in general, or the Prophecies or Miracles in particular, or any other particular argument, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the Christian religion, in order to evince its truth and excellence; the subject of which Dissertation shall be given out by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Masters of Trinity and St John's, his Trustees, or by some of them, on New Year's day annually; and that such Dissertation as shall be by them, or any two of them on Christmas Day annually the best approved, be also printed, and the expense defrayed out of the Author's income under his Will, and

the remainder given to him on St John the Evangelist's day following: and he who shall be so rewarded, shall not be admitted at any future time as a Candidate again in the same way, to the intent that others may be invited and encouraged to write on so sacred and sublime a subject.

He also desires, that immediately following the last of the clauses relating to the Prize Dissertation, this invocation may be added: "May the Divine blessing for ever go along with all my benefactions: and may the Greatest and Best of Beings, by His all-wise Providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to His own glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures."

SUBJECT PROPOSED BY THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR 1868:

The Characteristic Distinctions of Christian and Pagan Ethics.

ADJUDICATORS:—The Hulsean Trustees and the four Divinity Professors of the University of Cambridge.

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'Ερρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ.—St Paul.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE OBJECT AND SCOPE OF THE DISCUSSION.

Importance at present of dwelling on the practical effects of Christianity
Deists of the eighteenth century—Mr Buckle—Changed method of attack—Necessity of discussing the morality of those entirely free from Christian influence—This only possible in the case of Pagans —in their highest development—Hence the power and the continuous necessity of the Gospel learnt—Definition of Christian ethics—and its relation to dogmatics.

THE experience of the last two centuries has abundantly shown that the line of defence taken up by Christian apologists in one generation is rarely that best adapted to the needs of another. This arises partly from the fact that the assailants of the Catholic faith, beaten off the field with dishonour in one quarter, often renew the attack from a wholly

different stand-point, from which they must be dislodged by newer and more powerful weapons. Often it arises also from a change in the current metaphysics, involving a complete revolution in the manner of regarding the fundamental notions of philosophy. Whatever be the cause, it cannot be doubted that the higher and more influential intellects of the last generation, guided mainly by Coleridge, revolted from the method adopted by Paley in defending Christianity as strongly as they rejected his conclusions in ethics. But signs are not wanting of the rapid growth of a conviction, that much has yet to be added to the arguments of Coleridge, before they can be regarded as a generally satisfactory defence of the central truths of our religion. There will always be many, and those by no means the least high-minded and generous of men, to whom the subjective test will appear the most convincing; who will feel in the story of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth something that "finds" them in such a manner as to bear to their hearts with resistless force a living faith in the Son of God. Yet the tendencies of our time to rigid induction seem to require something more than an appeal to personal emotions or impressions. A distinguished prelate of the Established Church, preaching before an illustrious audience[1], put forward a line of reasoning which

[1] Dr Magee (now Bishop of Peterborough) before the British Association.

is likely to obtain a much more respectful attention from modern scientific men than the argument of Paley or even of Coleridge. In strict obedience to the laws of physical investigation, he gathered together the unquestioned facts of the origin and growth of the Christian life, and proposed the Church's creed as the only tenable hypothesis for the needful colligation of phenomena. And the present little essay is to be regarded as an attempt, within a very narrow compass and with very many imperfections, to carry out in one department the method then suggested.

The Church of Christ has always held every supposition inadequate to explain the wondrous change wrought in the life of the world by the Advent, which was not based on the belief of the Divinity of its Head. To weaken the force of this conviction, unbelievers have often attempted to deny the facts alleged and to underrate the change produced. For they have felt convinced that if once they could show the substantial identity of Pagan and Christian ethics, they would have made a great step towards securing the sympathies of mankind. It is true that there is really an inseparable connection between the purest religion and the highest morality, between right thinking and right action. But what God has joined, men are always endeavouring to put asunder. This separation, the fatal curse of the Church in every age, began very early with those who thought their orthodoxy a legitimate substitute

for the minor duties of truthfulness, humility and love. The neglected half of the truth, as is ever the case, reasserted itself in the form of a dangerous exaggeration, and while dogma was endeavouring to erect itself into religion, morality was attempting to stand unhelped by faith. "One half of Christianity was thus perpetually striving to pass for the whole, and to absorb all the attention, to the neglect, to the disparagement of, at length to a total separation from, its heaven-appointed consort[1]." The period, at which this unhappy severance was perhaps most complete, was the early half of the eighteenth century. This is not the place to dwell on the mournful results of a frigid orthodoxy: our concern is rather with the consequences of the opposite extreme. Many deistical writers appeared to revive the arguments, which Origen had refuted centuries before in the mouth of Celsus, and to prove that Christianity had really done nothing towards the improvement of morality. Dr Tindal, in his *Christianity as old as the Creation*, asserts that "all men have such a perfect knowledge of their duty, that they stand in no need of instruction or information[2]." Lord Bolingbroke maintains that "there is no one moral virtue which hath not been taught and proved by the heathen philosophers

[1] Milman, *Hist. of Christ.* III. 408 (new ed.). The present earnest attempt in France to establish 'la morale independante' calls for the thoughtful attention of the student of modern thought.

[2] Leland's *Deistical Writers*, Vol. I. pp. 112—130.

both occasionally and purposely[1]." And these are but random specimens of the assertions constantly put forth at that time, by those who would fain have impaired the claims of Revelation on our grateful reverence[2]. The champions of the faith in those days were fully equal to the duty that was thus laid on them. "Never was task more completely accomplished," writes Bp. Fitzgerald; "no literature of any recent date has perished more completely than the infidel literature of the early and middle parts of the last century. Ipsæ periere ruinæ[3]." Hence in our time the method of attack has been altered; and instead of an attempt to take the fortress by storm, it is thought more feasible to sap it by the secret mine. Some indeed of the old school of assailants still remain. Mr Buckle, for instance, writes as follows: "There is unquestionably nothing to be found in the world which has undergone so little change as those great dogmas of which moral systems are composed. To do good to others, to sacrifice for their benefit your own wishes, to love your neighbour as yourself, to forgive your enemies, to restrain your passions, to honour your parents, to respect those who are set over you,—these and a few others are the sole essentials of morals. But they have been

[1] Leland's *Deistical Writers*, Vol. I. pp. 112—130.

[2] Cf. Trench's *Hulsean Lectures*, p. 156, and Hardwick's *Christ and other Masters*, Vol. I. App. I.

[3] *Aids to Faith*, p. 44.

known for thousands of years, and not one jot or tittle has been added to them by all the sermons, homilies and text-books, which moralists and theologians have been able to produce[1]." He adds, in a note: "That the system of morals propounded in the New Testament contained no maxim which had not been previously enunciated, and that some of the most beautiful passages in the Apostolic writings are quotations from Pagan authors is well-known to every scholar. To assert that Christianity communicated to men moral truths previously unknown argues, on the part of the assertor, either gross ignorance, or else wilful fraud." And one[2] elaborate work has lately been crowned by the Institute of France, whose express object it is to prove that moral theories and ideas had a natural development in the ancient world, until they reached their purest form some centuries before the Christian era. But on the whole this method of viewing the question may be said to be rapidly becoming obsolete. The inductive tendencies of our time are repelled by a theory which offers such an unphilosophical explanation of admitted facts. "We are mistaken," we are told, "if we believe

[1] Vol. I. p. 164. Cf. *Anthropological Review*, pp. ccxxii ff.

[2] *Histoire des Théories et des Idées Morales dans l'Antiquité*, par J. Denis, 2 vols. Paris, 1856. The animus may be gathered from the following passage from the preface: "Que des idées et des sentiments qu'on refuse aux anciens aient eu l'impertinence de se produire quelque siècles trop tôt pour la paix de certaines opinions systématiques: je n'en puis rien." p. vii.

the critics of the present day to be animated by the spirit of the eighteenth century[1]. Time has advanced, and silenced frivolous attacks, insult and hatred. The sarcastic and mocking spirit of the last century has nothing in common with science[2]." They are willing to accept the moral teaching of Christianity as a great advance on all that had preceded it. Mr Buckle's theory as to the want of any progressive character in morality is answered thus by one of his warmest admirers[3]: "Nothing, it is said, is so immutable as morals. The difference between right and wrong was always known, and on this subject our conceptions can never be enlarged. But if by the term moral be included not simply the broad difference between acts which are positively virtuous and those which are positively vicious, but also the prevailing ideal of excellence, it is quite certain that morals exhibit as constant a progress as intellect." Mr Lecky, from whom this passage is taken, proceeds to trace out this development in detail in the cases of truth and humanity. The same view is yet more forcibly expressed by Mr Herbert Spencer[4]. And "attempts to prove that all the Christian morality was found in the writings of Greek or Latin philosophers

[1] M. Denis however distinctly asserts that it is this spirit and no other which animates him.

[2] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vol. 47. p. 549.

[3] Lecky's *History of the Rise and Progress of Rationalism in Europe*, I. 330 (with context).

[4] *Social Statics*, pp. 47—49 (new ed.).

anterior to Jesus Christ" are called by thinkers of this school, "utterly fruitless and unscientific[1]." Only they maintain that the dogmatic basis in which this Christian morality was founded, though needful perhaps as a support during a certain stage of the world's development, has been rendered completely unnecessary by the progress of civilization, and that now "it is a gross blunder to aim at greater certitude by resting the truth of our special opinions in morals and religion on our knowledge of the truth of our national religion[2]." In their attempt to maintain this position they have the support of a very common tendency among men, to depreciate a true theology in comparison with a noble morality. Arguments in defence of the dogmas of the church they listen to with impatience or fail entirely to comprehend; but every one is able to feel the beauty of a self-denying pure and upright life. The virtues of humble disciples among the early Christians won far more converts than the logic or eloquence of apologists, for *verba docent, exempla trahunt.* The one utterance which drew the most from the tumult of the World to the quiet of the Church's fold, was, "See how these Christians love one another," and the rapid growth of the new religion proved the efficiency of the method

[1] M. Eugéne Burnouf in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for Dec. 15, 1864, p. 982.

[2] F. W. Newman, *The Soul, &c.* p. 67. See also Theodore Parker's *Collected Works*, XI. pp. 127—152.

of conversion so tersely described by Minucius Felix, *non eloquimur magna, sed vivimus.* If then it can be shown that the morality of the gospel in no way transcends that which can be drawn from other sources, the task is tenfold harder to persuade men to accept the dogmas on which it is based; while the only hypothesis adequate to explain the phenomenon of the regeneration of morality falls with the denial of the phenomenon itself. It must indeed be frankly admitted, that in the present day there are instances of the rejection of almost all that the Christian holds most dear and sacred, combined with the most unblemished integrity, the most elevated morality, and the most self-denying benevolence. To say nothing of men still living, it is impossible to feel aught but reverence for the burning hatred of cruelty and wrong that glowed in the breast of Theodore Parker, or the constant devotion to the cause of humanity conspicuous in Auguste Comte. When an honest and earnest thinker makes the assertion that the Christian Church has now to face a loftier morality than its own, and either expand itself to embrace it, or be driven from the hearts of men by its far more potent influence[1], there must be facts and lives which, if they do not justify the assertion, at least may help us to understand how it should ever

[1] Essays on *International Policy*, pp. 220, 221. See Mr J. Ll. Davies' *Morality according to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, Sermon I.

have been made. But men like those to whom we are referring, sprung from races of which Christianity has been the moulding force for centuries, nurtured for the most part in Christian homes, and breathing an atmosphere saturated with Christian ideas[1], owe a debt to the Gospel which they reject, of whose extent they are probably utterly unconscious. It is impossible for them to look at ethical questions with minds uncoloured by Christian influences; and the question is not whether it be possible for a tree to retain for a time something of its leafy greenness, though severed from its roots, but whether it could have spread the glory of its branches far and wide, had it not been for the genial nurture of the soil from which it rises, and the air that bathes it round. Or to change the metaphor for one made sacred by the words of the Lord Himself: the fountain's basin may indeed for a while keep within it something of its limpid waters, even though the unseen channel be dammed that feeds it from the exhaustless stores deep hidden in the eternal hills: but shall men see it still '*leaping* up unto everlasting life'? To find the value of Christian ethics we must compare them, not with the schemes of those who have borrowed the conclusions whose premises they deny and whose sanctions they reject, but with other systems which have had a totally different origin. In the course of such a comparison we shall find that

[1] The favourite study of Aug. Comte was the *De Imitatione Christi*. Mill's *Comte*, p. 138.

much was added by the Gospel that had been absent from all previous systems of morality, and thus an answer will be found to those who maintain that its advent did little or nothing for the ethics of mankind. But it may be that we shall also find that this peculiar additional element consisted in something which mere civilisation however advanced can never supply, that the difference between the ethics of Christianity and those of Paganism lay in the introduction of that which man however cultured and developed still finds needful to a noble life; and thus we shall have met the arguments of those who think that in morality at least the Gospel has done its work. And finding thus how new, how needful, how mighty and how perennial was the force that came into the world with Jesus of Nazareth, what hypothesis will the strictest induction allow us to accept but that in very truth the Eternal Father, who had borne upon His heart through all the ages the burden of the sufferings and the sins of men, in the fulness of time sent down His Son, born of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and by all His discipline at last be conformed to His glorious image? So in both ways "some direct or collateral proof of the Christian religion" may be "afforded, in order to evince its truth and excellence."

For the purposes of an investigation such as that attempted in this essay, it is evidently necessary that those who would defend the honour of the faith of Christ should choose the strongest point of their an-

tagonists' position for attack. The proposition which the Christian apologist has to maintain is a universal negative that no pagan system of ethics can rival the perfection of the Christian ethics: it will not be sufficient to demonstrate with whatever cogency and force any merely particular negative. Hence we shall not have to dwell, except incidentally, upon the *popular* morality of pagan countries. The question is not mainly, whether any nation at large held the exalted views of right and the motives to it that are given in the Gospel, but whether the wisest and best ever attained to them. We shall be concerned then chiefly with the doctrines of the philosophers, and a brief historical survey will have to determine, which of these is most worthy of being considered the type of the highest development of Paganism. It is needless to discuss, in anticipation, a question which will solve itself in the course of such a survey. Mr Buckle quotes in the note above referred to with great approval the saying of Condorcet, "La morale de toutes les nations a été la même;" and cites a mutilated passage to the same effect from Sir James Mackintosh, singularly at variance with the general tenor of that writer's views. Whatever additional disproof of this theory is needed after the passage already quoted from Mr Lecky will be abundantly supplied by the appearance from time to time of duties, rights, and obligations which had been ignored or explicitly denied at an earlier period.

But in order to fix with greater precision the limits of the investigation on which we are about to enter, it will be necessary to define exactly the meaning of the term "Christian ethics." The science of ethics is mainly concerned with the determination of three questions: what method are we to pursue to ascertain what is right? what code of laws is given us by the method which we adopt[1]? what motives have we for obedience to this code? In other words, by what means and in what direction is the conscience, the ethical intellect, as Bunsen calls it, to be guided? how is the will to be influenced? Rothe[2], following here the guidance of Schleiermacher, defines its province in a manner which, different in form, is substantially the same: "Ethics necessarily embraces a doctrine of good, a doctrine of virtue, and a doctrine of duty." Hence the three main questions might have been expressed thus: why is a certain course of conduct a man's duty? wherein does this course of conduct called virtue consist? what is the chief good for man, that is, the most powerful motive to virtue? But if these be the main questions of Ethics in general, the principal object of *Christian* ethics is to answer them when asked in relation to Christians

[1] Harless, *Christliche Ethik*, pp. 39—46 (5th ed.).

[2] *Theologische Ethik*, Vol. I. p. 397 (2nd ed.). Wuttke (*Christliche Ethik*, I. 317, ed. 2) objects to this division that its three subjects of doctrine are but different aspects of the same fact. He considers Ethics under the heads of the active subject, the end towards which the action is directed, and the method of the activity (ib. p. 322).

especially. "The subject of Christian ethics is Christian truths so far as they on the one hand teach us what is morally good, and on the other move the will to realise the good, determining the mode and the motives of the realisation[1]." It deals not so much with mankind in themselves as with mankind viewed in the light of the Divine idea; it is based entirely on the motive conveyed in the word "regeneration[2]; it is according to Schleiermacher "the statement of the communion with God conditioned by communion with Christ the Redeemer, so far as this is the motive of all the actions of Christians." Hence dealing with the same great questions as those which furnish the matter to the wider science, of which it may be called a subdivision, it answers them for men who are in the position which it declares to be the normal one for man since the Advent, *i. e.* within the Church of Christ. Its relation to that one of the glorious company of Christian sciences which is most nearly allied to it, Christian dogmatics, is easily stated. For while the latter has for its aim the establishment of the great truths of the faith by polemic, the former assumes them as its data and traces the effect of their reception on daily life. The one discusses the evidence, historical and psychological, for a Fall of Man,—the other accepts it as a fact which shews the necessity

[1] Schmid (of Tübingen) *Christliche Sittenlehre*, quoted in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, XXIII. 337.

[2] Harless, *Christliche Ethik*, p. 92.

for some powerful motive to virtue: the one treats of the nature and the mode of regeneration,—the other assumes it as its starting-point, without discussing the when or the how of its production: the one marshals before our reason the proofs of the central fact of the Christian's creed, the Incarnation of the Son of God,—the other teaches how the Advent brought with it life and strength for all life's duties.

It will be therefore necessary for us to consider in the various Pagan systems to be reviewed the answers given to the three great questions: and then, without pausing for a moment to discuss the evidence of the dogmas of the Christian faith, to try to see in what manner and to what extent they supply both in theory and in practice that which had always been wanting before their appearance.

"The history of the race of Adam before the Advent is the history of a long and varied but incessant preparation for the Advent."—Right Hon. W. E. GLADSTONE.

CHAPTER II.

PAGAN ETHICS—THEIR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.

The ethical condition of the early Aryans—The Vedas—Menou—the Semitic nations—Buddhism—the Chinese—Greek morality in Homer—Hesiod—the Lyric and Gnomic poets—the defects in all—but the gradual development—the second stage of morality—sceptical in the Sophists—Socrates—his identification of virtue and knowledge—Plato—his contagious enthusiasm for virtue—how far successful—defects of his system—Aristotle—his analytical power—his systematic morality—imperfection in his ideal—his teaching essentially exclusive—Plato and Aristotle compared as to their relation to Christianity—Pagan morality reached a yet higher development—The Cyrenians—the Epicureans—the Stoics—their excellences and their failings—the general ethical condition of Greece.

THE all but impenetrable darkness which shrouds the earlier history of our race prevents us from obtaining any but the dimmest and most uncertain glimpses of its ethical condition in primeval times. Accepting frankly the biblical doctrine of a fall of man from a

state of perfect innocence as evidenced alike by the Mosaic narrative, the Pauline theology and the concurrent testimony of tradition and conscience[1], we yet find it exceedingly difficult to determine its exact effect on the conscience and the will of man. That the early Aryans regarded sin as a falling away from man's true life, and a sullying of the purity that became him, seems to have been fairly demonstrated by linguistic palaeontology[2]. But what the conceptions of the moral law and its obligations may have been we have no means of deciding. The eastern branch of this great stock, at least in the earliest times, seems to have known little of the application of dogmatic principles to the conduct of life. Morality is utterly unknown to the hymns of the Veda[3], and the higher we remount, the more wide the separation that we find in the Aryan notions between religion and morality. "The worshipper is overwhelmed by sorrow and perplexity: his hopes are blasted or his fortune wrecked, and with the spirit of a famished menial, he determines to apply for aid and compensation to some fresh divinity. His voice, which quivers with emotion, has at length found utterance in a passionate prayer. Yet what that prayer in almost every case solicits, is exemption from the physical ills of life, and a fuller and more sparkling cup

[1] Harless, *Christliche Ethik*, pp. 36—38.

[2] Pictet, *Les Aryas Primitifs*, II. 435, 559, 749.

[3] Eugene Burnouf in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, LIV. 981.

of temporal prosperity. Large and healthy families, cows and horses, fertile pastures, bounteous harvests, victory over public and domestic foes, are found to be the leading, not to say the solitary topics, in the supplications of the Vedas. We shall look in vain for penitential psalms, or hymns commemorating the descent of spiritual benefits[1]." In later times in the laws of Menou we find developed a system of philosophy based upon the idea of sin, and man's need of a purifier and a propitiation[2]. But its code of ethics was based upon asceticism and abstraction, so that it was powerless for good over all but a select class. To these indeed many beautiful precepts were given; nobleness, simplicity, benevolence, philanthropy, love even towards enemies were enjoined in these ancient maxims. For instance, "not only forgive, but even do good to him who is planning thy ruin, just as the sandal-tree even in its fall makes fragrant the axe that is felling it[3]." But the aim of this system was ever the perfection of the few, not the elevation of the many. The lower classes are darkened and live in delusion; it is given to a man of the highest class alone to aspire to a return to the bosom of Eternal Existence, or rather Nonentity, and to this end to purify his soul from all uncleanness and littleness that pure truth may quicken it and lead it to the point

[1] Hardwick, *Christ and other Masters*, Vol. I. p. 181.
[2] Maurice's *Ancient Philosophy*, p. 39.
[3] Many more of the kind are quoted by Von Bohlen, I. 364.

where the Ego is merged in the all[1]. The rest of the nation was left to sink unhindered into the impurity that is inseparably connected with the symbolic worship of the generative powers of nature[2]. The same degeneracy of what was originally a beautiful conception marked the religion and consequently the morality of many of the Semitic people. We have dark hints of the consequences of the worship of Baal in the doom of the Cities of the Plain and the destruction that afterwards fell on the Canaanite tribes. In countries where the grossest immorality was part of religion, it is useless to enquire any further as to the development of ethical conceptions. We may notice, however, in passing, that the cruel human sacrifices

[1] Cf. Schwarz, *Evangelische Sittenlehre*, I. 63—69.

[2] What Von Bohlen means by quoting with approbation an essay of Lobeck's, in which he maintains that the idolatry of the Greeks and Romans was by no means opposed to the pursuit of virtue, it is hard to understand. Whatever was the case in Greece and Rome, and very much may be said against Lobeck's position [see *inter alia* Döllinger's *Jew and Gentile*, II. 193—199, and the authorities quoted by Gieseler, *Church History*, I. p. 20], nothing is more clearly established than the intimate connection in Hindostan between the popular religion and the grossest licentiousness. [*Memoirs of the Anthropological Society*, Vol. I. 327 ff. and Vol. II. 264 ff.] Von Bohlen speaks with justice of their mild, courteous, modest and industrious disposition, which by its obedience to the moral prescriptions of their religion makes the ruder vices unknown. But there are such virtues as truthfulness and purity, and of these few traces are to be found in India. It is true, as Prof. Jowett says (*Romans*, &c. I. 64), that "a belief about Jupiter and Hades is not necessarily inconsistent with truth and purity of life." But it surely is not of little importance whether the ideal type of womanhood is Venus Pandemia or the Virgin mother of our blessed Lord.

which we find common among the Moabites, Phœnicians and Carthaginians show that at least these nations had vivid ideas of the existence of a moral law which they had violated, although they may have been grossly ignorant as to many of its commandments. To return to India: the divorce between religion and morality was terminated by the appearance of Çakyamouni. This is not the place to discuss at any length the work of that marvellous man. Suffice it to say, that from the first he presented himself as the founder of a religion of morality based upon virtue and charity. "When his disciples," says Eugène Burnouf, "united into a council to compose the primitive Buddhist church, the only end which they proposed to attain was not to teach men a new metaphysic, but to change their manners, which were bad; to free their souls from the passions which abased them, and to reunite them in one universal sentiment of love[1]." It was just this restoration of the divinely appointed union of religion and morality, that made Çakyamouni one of the greatest reformers that the world has seen, and renders his system the spiritual food at the present time of two hundred millions of human beings. But while the Buddhist unites again religion and morality, he fails to combine them in their due proportions. Having emancipated himself from the old metaphysical religion, he

[1] Burnouf, u. s. p. 987.

has created for himself a new one, one especially narrow, artificial, material. "Those who would not be priests or have priests practise all priestly impostures, are slavishly priest-ridden. The adored intellect makes no progress: the seeker after wisdom finds no resource but in identifying the search with the object, and confessing that he finds nothing. Can this be the process destined for the emancipation of mankind[1]?"

Attempts have been made to advance very exalted claims on behalf of the ethical system of the Chinese sages[2]. It was the especial delight of Voltaire to discover passages in their writings, which he might with some show of reason be able to declare equal or superior to the precepts of the Gospel. We might, in reply dwell upon the fact that has been well brought out by one of the ablest recent writers on Christian ethics, that "in China morality does not look forwards, but backwards: there is no ideal in the future to attain to, but the past represents the highest virtue[3]:" and show how far inferior this acquiescence in that which has been already reached must be in power and perfection to the spirit that "counts not itself to have apprehended," but is ever striving after increased likeness to a perfect ideal. But it will perhaps be enough to dismiss the subject with two quotations.

[1] Maurice, u. s. p. 53.

[2] For one of the latest, see *Anthrop. Review*, Vol. III. p. ccxxii.

[3] Wuttke, op. cit. I. 29.

The first is from a quarter whence we need expect no prejudice against anything that is set up as a rival to the gospel: "The moral, social and political precepts of Confucius are perfectly childish in comparison of Greek ethics or Hebrew proverbs[1]." The other is not less strong, but from a very different stand-point: "A gloomy severity, a despairing sinking into nothingness, an immoral life often ending in suicide, prevail among the Chinese from their petrified morality[2]." That these expressions are not too strong might be proved by a hundred quotations from the writings of recent travellers. In China as in India we see the utter powerlessness of a speculative system of ethics, entirely severed from the religion of the people.

The earliest glimpses, that we get of the ethical views of the Greeks, are those afforded us in the poems that bear the name of Homer. Whatever may be our opinions as to the personality of the poet, it cannot at least be doubted that we may find in these and similar ancient epics a faithful reflection of the manners and ideas of the times in which they were written. "The very same circumstances which divest their composers of all credibility as historians, render them so much the more valuable as unconscious expositors of their own contemporary society. While professedly describing an uncertified past, their combinations are involuntarily borrowed from the sur-

[1] *Westminster Review*, LXXXVIII. p. 546.

[2] Schwarz, *Evangelische Christliche Ethik*, p. 53.

rounding present[1]." We may, therefore, fairly draw from Homer materials for a sketch of Pagan ethics in the earliest historical times of Hellas[2]. The state of society depicted may be described as a noble barbarism. The "ethical intellect" was but little enlightened; morality was purely traditional: its precepts based upon the practice and example of ancestors, not upon the conviction of the individual. Crimes of violence were for the most part held in little or no abhorrence[3]: piracy was common and was considered by no means a dishonourable occupation. It was usual to ask strangers arriving at a sea-port if they were engaged in it, thereby implying no disapproval or reproach to their guests on the part of the questioners[4]. "There is no sense of obligation between man and man as such, and very little between each man and the community of which he is a member[5]." The feelings of strong personal attachment which have always distinguished semi-civilized races are found in abundance, but the will of a superior seems to have stood to them in place of a moral code. The notion indeed of *law* which the

[1] Grote, I. 454 (new ed.); cp. Gladstone, *Juventus Mundi*, p. 7.

[2] An attempt has been made by Nitzsch and others of the Chorizontic school to distinguish the morality of the *Iliad* from that of the *Odyssey;* but without success. See Mure, *Greek Literature*, Vol. I. App. VII.; Gladstone, u. s. p. 15.

[3] Gladstone, *Homer and the Homeric Age*, II. pp. 440—475.

[4] Cf. Thuc. I. 5; and Hom. *Od.* III. 71, 72. Cf. Schol.

[5] Grote, Vol. I. The author of *Ecce Homo* has brought out strikingly this want of sensibility on moral points.

word bore to an Athenian or Roman is almost non-existent: θέμιστες take the place of νόμοι[1]. As might have been expected, we find revenge regarded not only as excusable but as a positive duty, and the feuds of families and nations supply the motives for no small proportion of the numberless wars. But on the other hand, the virtues commonly found among barbarians are equally developed[2]; hospitality, reverence for a suppliant, frankness and mutual devotion among kinsmen and companions in arms. And although we might not have looked for this, there is singular purity of manners and attachment to domestic ties. The fouler blots on the Hellas of later days nowhere mar the brightness of these early times. Of all the works of Greek literature, the earliest are probably the purest; and the position of women in the Homeric poems is far more elevated than that assigned to them in the palmiest days of Athenian glory. Odysseus had his Penelope, Hector his Andromache: but in the eyes of Pericles or even Socrates, a wife was merely an inconvenient burden necessary for the procreation of legitimate children. We see then, as regards the enlightenment of the conscience, grave and important deficiencies; but when we turn to the latter portion of our discussion and consider the relation of the will to known duties, the verdict must be more favourable. The separation

[1] Maine, on *Ancient Law*.

[2] Grote, I. 478; *Juventus Mundi*, p. 378.

between religion and morality, complete as we have seen in the Vedas, complete as we shall see in later times, has not yet been brought about. It is true that the Homeric gods themselves seem to lay more stress upon sacrifice than upon obedience, upon ritual than upon virtue. But Mr Gladstone has shown satisfactorily that in this point, "the theistic system of the Greeks was worse than their ethical instinct." This placed a regard to the gods as one of the most powerful incentives to the practice of virtue. It was supplemented by the voice of conscience, and that undefineable feeling of *αἰδώς*, which restrained a man from committing any action disapproved by the generality of mankind[1]. The operation of these three motives seems on the whole to have kept the Homeric Hellenes faithful to their own ideas of morality. Hence, lax as these were, and leaving room for the indulgence of the most natural and imperious passions, we find no vivid sense of a want of harmony between their own lives and the ideal. The notion of sin so common in Hesiod is almost unknown to the brighter muse of Homer. It is of importance that in estimating the value of this fact, we should attach due weight to a caution given us by Dr Curtius: "Plato recognized Ionic life with all its charms and all its evils and infirmities in the epos of Homer: and we should wrong the Greeks who lived before Homer if we judged of their moral and religious condition

[1] Gladstone, *Homeric Studies*, III. 427—430.

by the frivolity of the Ionic singer, if we would deny the people to have possessed what Homer omits to mention, e.g. the idea of the pollution incurred by the shedding of the blood of a fellow citizen and of the expiation it demands[1]." But, on the whole, we cannot be far wrong in saying that Homer paints for us a time when the moral sentiment was far from being philosophically perfect, and yet the will coincided with it, sufficiently at least to prevent any very strong feeling of want of harmony. This seems to be in part at least what Sir A. Grant means when he says: "The morality in Homer is very much what you would expect; it is concrete not abstract, it expresses the conception of a heroic life, rather than a philosophical theory[2]."

If in Homer we have the ethical characteristics of the Ionians, from Hesiod we may gather those of the Æolo-Bœotic peoples. It is always difficult to determine with exactness how much is due to an author's own genius and tendencies, how much to the circumstances in which he is placed. But we probably shall not be wrong in discovering in the poems of Hesiod a great change in the moral ideas, not only of the poet, but also of his countrymen since the time of Homer[3]. We find at once a great enlightenment of the understanding, and a deeper tone

[1] *History of Greece*, Vol. I. p. 154 (Prof. Ward's translation).

[2] *Ethics of Aristotle*, I. p. 51.

[3] The weight of authority seems to be now in favour of assigning a

of sadness. As the requirements of the moral law become better understood, there is a keener perception of man's failure to fulfil that law. The fall of man is dwelt upon in two myths, inconsistent indeed with each other, but each showing the importance attaching to the subject in the mind of the poet. We have come out of the region of a chivalrous barbarism into that of a more peaceful, prudent agricultural life. There are many shrewd and impressive precepts introduced; justice, prudence, energy in the affairs of daily life are insisted on; but there is throughout a cold utilitarian view of ethics, which seems to have made the poet peculiarly distasteful to Plato[1]. He recognizes sadly the disorders of his time, the corruption of the debased age in which his lot is cast; yet has no more potent spell at his command to check these evils than an appeal to an enlightened self-interest, and the dread of future punishment. "All Hesiod's apophthegms are given on the grounds of expediency. It is better to be hospitable, generous, honest, &c., because you will meet with the like return from others[2]." The difficulty of a virtuous life is perhaps for the first time

later date to Hesiod than to Homer, and the manner in which he speaks of iron strongly confirms this view. [Gladstone, *Juventus Mundi*, p. 267.] But whatever his chronological position may be, that his ethical conceptions belong to a more developed stage cannot admit of doubt.

[1] *Rep.* 363 A. Col. Mure's remarks on Hesiod's ethics are relied upon by Mr Buckle to maintain the thesis already referred to.

[2] Paley on *Op. et Di.* v. 342.

in Greek literature fully recognized[1]; but no help is given by the poet whereby this difficulty may be overcome; save that when once the long and steep path of virtue is climbed, though rugged at first, it will then be smooth and easy[2]. This is the only gleam of light that at all irradiates the gloom of the picture of life and destiny.

Homer and Hesiod furnish us with the earliest examples of the popular and unconscious morality which is the first stage in the ethical development of every nation. In Hellas this may be said to have lasted to the middle of the fifth century before Christ. "It relied partly on the unquestioned authority of the laws of the state, and partly on the all-powerful influence of custom and education, regarding general convictions as the unwritten laws of God, which no one could trace to a definite origin[3]. The need of an enquiry into the foundations of morality was never felt nor was the duty required of proving its necessity, or of supporting it by an appeal to personal conviction[4]." To this stage of unconscious morality we may

[1] Vv. 287—292: "locus amplissimis antiquorum testimoniis celebratus." Gaisf.

[2] Compare the well-known passage in Mr Tennyson's Ode:

> The path of duty is the way to glory.
> He who treads it, only thirsting &c.

[3] Soph. *Ant.* 456, 457,

> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθὲς, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> ζῇ ταῦτα κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.

[4] Zeller's *Socrates* (trans. Reichel), p. 192.

refer all the lyric and gnomic poets. Widely as the cynical and savage Theognis, the courtly equable Simonides, the wise and patriotic Solon differ from each other in their personal characteristics, we find much the same tone of morality running through their writings. And here we may notice the same characteristic that we found in Hesiod. Their maxims of conduct are for the most part merely prudential. This is peculiarly the case with the utterances of the Seven Sages. There is no attempt to enforce these rules by an appeal to any higher motive than temporal expediency, and a dread of the *νέμεσις* of the gods.

A second characteristic that must strike us especially is the commendation given to revenge. It might be unfair to argue the general condition of Hellenic ideas at this period solely from the utterances of a ferocious oligarch like Theognis embittered by misfortune. It would not be easy perhaps to find parallels to the cold-blooded atrocity of some of his expressions. For instance, "Flatter thy enemy well, but when he has come into thy grasp, avenge thyself on him:" or "Would that I might drink their black blood[1]!" But we find the general notion that it is incumbent on every one to love his friends and hate his enemies so often expressed that we cannot doubt that it formed a part of the morality of the time. Archilochus for instance writes: "One great thing I

[1] *Fragg.* vv. 363, 364, 349, Bergk.

understand, how to repay with terrible evils him that has done me any evil[1]." Pindar says: "May it be mine to love my friend, but against an enemy I will, an enemy myself, make a sudden assault like a wolf, going now here, now there, in crooked ways[2]." And again: "One ought to do everything to injure one's enemy[3]." This feeling of the duty of revenge held its ground long in the popular morality, which was never supplanted entirely by later philosophical conceptions of ethics. Numberless quotations could be adduced from later poets to prove this[4]; but perhaps nothing brings it into as clear a light as a common practice of the Athenian orators. To avoid the fatal charge of *sycophantia*, any one prosecuting a fellow-citizen for some public offence endeavoured to show that he had private and personal grounds of enmity against the accused; and if he succeeded in proving this, it was considered the most natural and reasonable thing in the world that he should endeavour to satisfy his hatred by becoming public prosecutor[5].

[1] *Frag.* 59, Bergk. [2] *Pyth.* II. 153—155.

[3] *Isthm.* IV. 80, Bergk.

[4] Cf. Jacobs, ad *Del. Epigr. Graec.* p. 144.

[5] Cf. Dem. *c. Androt.*: "As Euctemon having been wronged by Androtion, men of the jury, determines at the same time to seek justice for the commonwealth and satisfaction on his own account, I will endeavour to do the same if I possibly can." After giving the details of the injury he had suffered, he goes on: "I will endeavour with your assistance, both now and at all times hereafter, to avenge myself upon him" (p. 593). Cf. *in Timocr.* p. 701. This characteristic has been noticed by Mr Lewes, *Hist. Phil.* I. 108 (new ed.).

Another point that calls for notice in this popular Hellenic morality is the absence of any injunctions with regard to purity. It would be going too far to say that it directly sanctions immorality; but at least it takes little trouble to check it. And in this respect we find a great degeneracy since the time of Homer. We can hardly be wrong in ascribing this in great degree to the development of the worship of Dionysus. Of oriental origin, and probably identical with the worship of Baal, the Semitic Sun-God, this cult was hardly known to Homer[1], and we find many traces of a vigorous opposition to its introduction. But it rapidly spread, till there was hardly a portion of Hellas that escaped the demoralising influence of its licentious orgies[2]. Whatever the cause, we must admit that there is a terrible falling off from the comparative purity of the Homeric times, not only in the power that the claims of chastity and self-control were able to exert, but also in the recognition of these claims. Vices are common and not regarded with abhorrence that were then unknown, and the bonds of social and domestic relations are grievously relaxed. Finally, truth appears to have been little cared for on its own account[3], though the deception of a friend was regarded

[1] Gladstone, II. 269, &c.; and Donaldson, *Theatre of the Greeks.*

[2] How terrible these were in later times may be learnt from Liv. XXXIX. cc. 8. 14—18.

[3] In Schneider's curious *Christliche Klänge* there are few or no injunctions to purity or truthfulness drawn from writers of this period.

as base: we have already seen how Pindar is willing to adopt any crooked ways to do harm to his enemy: and the lies of the Spartans were proverbial.

But while there are thus some points which would seem to justify Mr Gladstone's dictum that the tendency of Greek morality was chiefly downwards and not upwards, there are redeeming features of which we must not lose sight. It is no longer the personal attachment to a political chief that is the motive to self-sacrifice: men have risen to the conception of duty to their country[1]. It is true that this was for the most part miserably narrow; that it often meant simply devotion to a party, and was always accompanied by intense jealousy and hatred towards neighbouring states. The Pan-Hellenic sentiment only made its appearance towards the close of this period[2] in men like Callicratidas. But the step that had already been made was of much importance. It was perhaps no great advance; but it was an advance in the direction of the Christian conception of humanity as the common subjects of the kingdom of God.

Another change in the prevailing sentiment was also of good omen for the future. The tone of dis-

[1] I cannot help quoting once more the epigram of Simonides over those that fell at Thermopylae:

ὦ ξεῖν' ἀγγέλλειν Λακεδαιμονίοις ὅτι τῇδε
κείμεθα τοῖς πατρίδος ῥήμασι πειθόμενοι.

[2] Grote, v. 498 (new ed.). The exception quoted by Mr Grote in Vol. III. p. 44 seems apparent rather than real.

satisfaction with the present moral condition of the race, which, absent in Homer, we have found in Hesiod, is yet more conspicuous in his lyric and gnomic successors. The want of harmony between the ideal and the real began to be felt. It showed itself indeed in abnormal and unworthy forms, in the growth of the Orphic mysteries and the weird worship of Dionysus Zagreus[1], and in the influence acquired by wandering seers and jugglers who claimed the power of expiating offences by a system of "masses for the soul[2]." These tendencies showed unworthy conceptions of the gods, and indeed threatened the very foundations of morality; but they were not altogether a sign of evil. The physician had far rather see the pain which shows that the constitution of his patient is struggling to expel the poison that is sapping his strength, than the lethargy which only betokens the abandonment of the effort. And we may surely regard this torturing sense of sin, these wild and often grovelling attempts to throw its burden off, as the moan of the creature that knew itself to be out of harmony with its Maker's law, as blind gropings after the God, that even then was not far from any one of them.

This popular unconscious morality long continued to represent the ethical views of the ignorant and unlearned. But a remarkable revolution was wrought

[1] Müller's *Greek Literature*, Vol. I. p. 306.
[2] Plato's *Republic*, p. 364 B.

in the opinions of the more educated classes by the influence of a body of men passing under the general name of Sophists. This is not the place to delay over a general discussion of their character: had we time it would be a most interesting task to consider what light has been shed upon this problem by the recent discussions, to which Mr Grote, Mr Lewes, Dr Stirling, Mr Cope, Dr Zeller and Sir A. Grant have brought such a wealth of learning. But our object is solely to trace the course by which the ethical ideas of Pagans were brought to the highest perfection that they ever attained. And even those, who most earnestly defend the Sophists, do not ask us to consider them representatives of the highest morality of their time; they would be quite contented, if we allowed that they were not quite so bad as they have been usually painted. But all the disputants we have mentioned, widely as they differ upon the personal character of the so-called Sophists, are pretty much at one upon the nature of the work they did. It was essentially the work of scepticism. Every received opinion was questioned, and had to give a satisfactory explanation of its *raison d'être*, and if it failed in doing so, no regard to its reverend antiquity could save it from immediate and contumelious rejection. For those who fell under the influence of the Sophists unconscious morality was no more possible. The authority on which the traditional maxims rested was boldly challenged. They were asserted to exist merely

νόμῳ not φύσει: and it remained only to prove that the νόμος was itself based upon φύσις; and this conventional appeals to the wisdom of ancestors were powerless to effect. Hence arose a shaking of old opinions, a general uncertainty of tenure of even the most universally accepted maxims[1]. This was full of danger in the eyes of the old-fashioned conservative Μαραθωνόμαχοι, of whom Aristophanes was the mouthpiece, who applauded to the echo the broad fun of the *Clouds*, and finally condemned the man whom they considered to be the foremost of the new school to drink the fatal hemlock. We cannot deny that there was much reason for their apprehensions. Then as now not a few, who commenced the journey across the dreary desert of doubt, found their courage or their fixity of purpose fail them amidst its horrors, or perished miserably by the way, before they reached the safe and fruitful land that lies beyond it. But then as now the only way to a sure abiding-place for those who have once begun the journey lay, in a steadfast faithful following of the lead of the cloudy pillar across that desert, not in any timorous refuge on the hither side of it. Just as Schiller ventured to call the

[1] Cf. Stirling on Schwegler. "There is a period in the history of the state when people live in tradition, that is a period of unreflected *Sittlichkeit* or natural observance: then there comes a time when the observances are questioned and when the right or truth they involve is reflected into the subject. This is a period of Aufklärung, and for Sittlichkeit there is substituted Moralität, subjective morality." Note on Schwegler, p. 395.

Fall a gigantic stride in the development of humanity[1], so it was necessary that the Hellenic nation should choose between good and evil with the deliberate choice of men who know that both exist.

One man alone seemed to have understood the requirements of the times, and that was Socrates. He knew well that the true path must be forwards and not backwards,—so he met the Sophists on their own ground, and by "his wisdom, eloquence and faith unshaken[2]," put them to ignominious flight. They had maintained that virtue was arbitrary, inconstant, wavering with the advantage of the moment[3]. He was convinced that it must be unchangeable, governed by an eternal law. They had made all depend on an arbitrary subjective opinion. He felt the necessity of demonstrating that a truly moral action could not proceed from wavering opinions, but from a self-assured moral consciousness[4], the consciousness of the idea of good whereby everything was determined. "From the stand-point of antiquity there was but one means to bring this higher self-consciousness into a state of consistency and clearness, the intervention of knowledge[5]." Hence he made virtue consist in knowledge[6], and held that as it was so far the best

[1] See *The Divine Treatment of Sin*, by Mr Baldwin Brown, Sermon I.

[2] Arnold. Thucydides.

[3] Compare, *e.g.* the language of Thrasymachus in *Rep.* Bk. I. and Polus in the *Gorgias*.

[4] Neander, *Theologische Vorlesungen*, Vol. V. p. 59. [5] Ibid. p. 61.

[6] This is stated perhaps most clearly by Arist. *Mor. Mag.* I. 1.

thing that all departures from it could only be made from ignorance, that as vice was an evil to the perpetrator, no one would willingly do any evil to himself. He even goes so far as to maintain that whoever intentionally lies or otherwise does wrong is better than he who should do the same unwillingly[1]. For in the latter case knowledge, that is, virtue itself, is wholly wanting; in the former it is but temporarily impaired[2]. But the incomplete ethical terminology of his own time seems to have led him astray. He was anxious above all things to find some objective standard of virtue; to disprove the sophistical assertion that justice is a convention; and this he did by maintaining that "justice is a science," that is, something which may be attained to, not by the authority of society, but by the exercise of the individual reason. He could not conceive the possibility that man, a thinking reasonable animal, should so far sink below himself, so far belie the very law of his being, as to act without rational judgment and purpose. But herein he lost sight of the distinction that I have been endeavouring to keep prominently in view throughout, between the ethical intellect and the will. The *σοφία* of the one he confused with the *σωφροσύνη* of the other[3]. Had he been content with maintaining that virtue must coincide with the decisions of the ethical

[1] Schwegler, pp. 48 and 51 (Stirling's trans. ed. 2).
[2] Xenophon, *Mem.* IV. 2. 20.
[3] Xen. *Mem.* III. 9.

intellect (or with the "rational consciousness" as Sir A. Grant calls it), instead of being identified with it, little would have been wanting to the theoretical perfection of his doctrine. It would have been still practically very deficient, from the want of an adequate motive supplied to the will. In his own case he was readily carried over this difficulty by his singularly elevated and enthusiastic temper. But to men of a more ignoble stamp, it is evident that the ethical system of Socrates could have been of little help. It cannot avail much to say that virtue and knowledge are one to those whose hearts are moaning in misery: "the good that I would I do not, the evil that I would not that I do."

It has been remarked with profound truth that "no heart is pure that is not passionate, no virtue safe which is not enthusiastic[1]." The greatest pupil of Socrates seems to have felt this, and to have perceived the point in which his master's ethical system failed. Hence he called to his assistance two of the most powerful motives which influenced the Hellenic mind. In his own system the supreme good was the attainment of likeness to God so far as possible to man[2]. To him God was the fountain of eternal ideas, above all of the idea of *τὸ καλόν*, which like the sun manifests itself by its own power, and communicates itself to

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 8.

[2] *Ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν*: cf. *Meno*, p. 88; Schwarz, *Ethik*, p. 86.

the reason whereby it is grasped[1]. The contemplation of this ideal beauty then is the supreme bliss of man; it is attained to by the reason, that faculty which he has in common with the Deity, and by whose development he is made like unto Him. But reason can only be kept pure and its mental vision clear by abstaining from all that would obscure or contaminate it. To use his own metaphor, the steeds of passion and impulse must be broken in and kept well under control by the guiding reason, that the chariot may be carried along its appointed course without stay or wandering, and so be borne more and more frequently into that super-sensuous region, where alone the ideal forms of beauty, truth and goodness are so to be seen in all their purity[2]. And when once the ideal beauty has been seen, the lower animal passions, before wildly striving against the control of reason, perish with fear[3]. We see thus how Plato calls into the service of virtue both the passionate love for the beautiful[4], so intense among all the

[1] *Republic*, p. 508.

[2] This image is worked out with great fulness in *Phaedr.* 254.

[3] *Phaedr.* 254 E, ὅταν ἴδῃ [sc. ὁ πονηρὸς ἵππος] τὸ καλόν, φόβῳ διόλλυται. "The extinction of gross appetite by the actual presence of beauty coveted in absence is a remarkable feature in the psychology of this passage." Dr Thompson's note in l. c.

[4] *Eros.* Cf. *Phaedr.* passim. There is an interesting discussion of the relation of the Platonic *eros* to Christian *faith* in Dr F. C. Baur's *Das Christliche des Platonismus* (pp. 49—56). Mr Westcott (*Dict. Bible*, art. 'Philosophy,' also in the *Contemporary Review*) thinks that

Greeks, and the longing for likeness to the highest excellence that has rarely faded entirely from the breasts of men in any age or clime. If this craving for the vision of the perfectly beautiful is to be satisfied, if the yearning for conformity to God is to be realised, this can only be done by a resolute subjection of the passions and the will, "the appetites whose object is sensual pleasure, and the impulses that prompt to energetic action[1]" alike to the control of the reason. This is the spring that Plato relies on to move the will, to restore the harmony between knowledge and conduct, which Socrates had endeavoured to bring back by a process that was really little better than verbal juggling. The noblest minds in every age Plato's method has succeeded in inspiring with an enthusiasm that has rendered their virtue safe. There have always been some, whose keen sense of the beautiful and longing for likeness to the unseen Ideal have carried them safely through the temptations of their lower nature, and enabled them to live a pure and Godlike life. But with the great mass of mankind it has been far otherwise. Living in the present, and utterly unable to shake off the tyranny of the seen and sensuous and to rise to the conception of abstract beauty and perfection, they have found the maxims of philosophers of little help

it is rather the myths of the philosopher which correspond to the faith of the Christian.

[1] See Dr Thompson's edition of the *Phaedrus*, App. I. p. 166.

in the daily battle with the world, the flesh and the devil.

However perfect then the ethics of Plato might have been theoretically, however valuable practically for a few of the most noble and elevated souls, it is evident that his system was utterly incapable of becoming the moral guide and regenerator of humanity at large. It remains for us now that we have considered its relation to the will, to see what light it shed upon the ethical intellect. Here we must recognize at the outset the difficulties under which it commenced its work. The popular conventional morality was felt to be faulty and incomplete. Besides, its very foundations had been shaken by the scepticism of the Sophists. It was needful therefore to start from the very beginning. The morality of Plato, like all morality pretending to the title of scientific, was based upon psychology. What his views with respect to this were, has been already seen at least in outline in the simile of the chariot and horses. It appears yet more clearly from the well-known division of classes in his ideal state. The soul is divided into three parts, one divine and rational, another a lower sensuous faculty, and the third, the *θυμός*, acting as a kind of intermediate agent between these two. To these correspond the three classes in the state, the deliberative, the productive, and the auxiliary respectively. Now it had been already proved that the state attained to justice, the crown of

virtues, in which all others find their synthesis and harmony, by the due discharge of its special functions by each of the three classes (*Rep.* IV. 436—441). The perfection of the auxiliary class gives it courage, the perfection of the deliberative class, wisdom, and the harmonious submission of the two governed classes to the governing one produces temperance. Hence arise the four cardinal virtues of a state, and these same are the characteristics of a perfect man. The perfection of τὸ λογιστικὸν is wisdom, the perfection of τὸ θυμικὸν is courage, the submission of τὸ θυμικὸν and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν to τὸ λογιστικὸν is temperance; and the right discharge of its functions by each constitutes justice, the supreme and all-embracing virtue. Thus we are brought to the celebrated list of the four cardinal virtues. In the process by which they are attained we see exemplified the Platonic principle, that ethical conceptions cannot be isolated and considered separately. "You must take the mind as a whole, or rather society as a whole, before you can judge of any of its parts[1]." It is needless to stay to point out how immeasurably superior this principle is from a scientific point of view to the previous morality of disjointed and often inconsistent maxims. But we may notice how valuable it is also as a protest against the subjective view of ethics that might seem to follow, that we know in the case of the Cynics and

[1] Grant, I. 37.

the Cyrenaics did follow, from the dictum of Socrates that virtue was knowledge. But when we come to examine this list of the virtues more closely we cannot but find serious imperfections in it. Scientifically speaking, it is open to objection because justice in this scheme is not co-ordinate with the other three virtues, but is little more than a combination of wisdom and temperance. Further, by rendering justice an end in itself, he has made the notion of reciprocity, as Mr Bain has noticed[1], hazy and indistinct. This fault was perceived by Aristotle, and provoked an analytical reaction[2], which indeed characterised his general treatment of Plato's list. Virtue is defined with reference to the good only of the agent himself, and even justice, which to us appears pre-eminently the social virtue, is resolved into the supremacy of reason within the individual mind. It is apparently never noticed that its essential part is the recognition and observance of the rights of others[3]. Again, the idea of purity for its own sake is but little recognized[4]; the darkest of all the prevalent sins of the Hellenic world is indeed condemned; but it is often spoken of in terms which show little or no abhorrence of it. And, the most serious omission of all, no place whatever is found for benevolence. When we add that

[1] *Mental and Moral Science*, p. 472. [2] Grant, I. 163.

[3] Mill's *Dissertations and Discussions*, III. 344; and Grote's *Plato*, III. 133 and 159.

[4] Grote's *Plato*, III. 375 and 389.

there is no conception whatever of the claims of those outside the Hellenic pale to equal justice and consideration with his own countrymen, it will be seen that Plato's system is very far from perfect as regards the ethical intellect. A man's duties to himself are pretty fully recognized in the injunction of that purity of soul that is needed for the contemplation of ideal beauty; his duties to his neighbours are very insufficiently represented by justice even in the extended meaning which Plato assigns to it; and his duties to God are inadequately stated for want of a clear idea of the nature to which he is to be conformed. The imperfection of the system cannot be wondered at when we notice, how Plato failed to secure that which is one of the most essential points in scientific ethics, a satisfactory objective criterion of right and wrong. That which he adopted resolves itself ultimately into the science of good and evil as determined by the wise man: but a standard so vague and indefinite could obviously determine nothing practically. Even the magnificence of his primary conception of the end of man, as likeness to God so far as possible is impaired by three considerations[1]. In the first place, while in the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus* he speaks of a personal self-conscious active God, elsewhere he appears to recognize only an absolute impersonal existence (as was afterwards the case in Neo-Platonism), as the

[1] Neander, *Theologische Vorlesungen*, Vol. v. pp. 62—71.

ideal source of good. "The same distance which separates the God of Plato from the God of the Christian, separates the two moralities. On one side, duality leads to the annihilation of individuality, on the other, triumphant spiritualism consecrates human individuality and takes it for the corner-stone of the edifice. Plato, like the Gospel, says to man that his duty is to resemble God; but whilst the God of Plato is only a sublime idea, a being of reason, who does not enter into direct communion with men, the God of the Christian is the living God, the All-holy and All-good, the God revealed by Jesus Christ whose name is Love. Hence the richness and the fruitfulness of the Gospel morality[1]." Secondly, we find a condition necessarily limiting the realisation of this ethical principle. For the visible creation from the beginning was constituted in such a manner that the highest ideal could not be reached in it: there was a principle antagonistic to the divine, that could never be got rid of, but would ever hinder the attainment of this likeness to the Deity, in the ὕλη by which ideas here are always conditioned. The two principles, the one of the ethical constitution of the world which appears as the revelation and realisation of the divine ideas in the world,—the other, that which is based upon the irreconcileable opposition in matter against the divine, are ever antagonistic to each other. This opposition was

[1] De Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles*, &c. Vol. I. p. 161.

reconciled first by the realisation of the divine ideal under all material conditionings by Christ. It is a natural sequence from this "cosmological conception" (to use Mr Masson's convenient phrase) that Plato abandoned the attempt to produce perfect virtue in the individual or the community except under the conditions afforded by a purely ideal state, which he could hardly have dreamed of ever seeing established on earth. But "Christian morality needs no external relations for its development[1]." There is no state-life, no individual life conceivable, where likeness to God as revealed in His Son under all possible hindrances of external position, may not be won by His loving obedient children. But thirdly, this likeness to God must be recognized as the end not only of some men, but of all men, of mankind. Here especially the philosophy of Plato broke down. It was a morality not for the many, but for the few. To satisfy the requirements of the case, it should have afforded a central point and goal for the historical development of mankind. But this magnificent idea, the key-note to which Christian morality is pitched, of the progress of the whole race to the attainment of likeness to God and fellowship with Him in His kingdom of love[2], is utterly unknown to Plato. One virtue alone is possible to the vast class of producers—obedience; all higher

[1] Neander, *History of Christianity*, I. p. 107.

[2] Cf. v. Hirscher, *Christliche Moral*. III. p. 8; Schwarz, *Sittenlehre*, &c. p. 314.

moral excellence is reserved for the favoured ones who are able to abstract themselves from the affairs of earth, and contemplate, as unceasingly as human frailties will suffer them, the ideal to which they strive to be conformed. But we cannot conceive a Platonist standing the test of Kant's categorical imperative: "Act always on a maxim which thou couldst will to be law universal[1]." Plato shared the opinion of Voltaire, though he would have shrunk from the brutal cynicism with which it is expressed: "La philosophie ne sera jamais faite pour la peuple; la canaille d'aujourd'hui ressemble en tout à la canaille d'il y a quatres milles ans: nous n'avons jamais voulu éclairer les cordonniers et les servantes. C'est la partage des apôtres[2]." It is impossible to express more justly than in the words of the brilliant Frenchman the characteristic distinction between the ethics of the Gospel and the ethics of the purest and most enlightened philosophy. It *is* the task of apostles and their successors to enlighten the artisan and the maidservant. But that which their enemies have fastened upon them as a badge of shame they have delighted to bear as their proudest ensign; and the grateful reverence of eighteen centuries, the elevation of the poor and the oppressed, the regeneration of a world, have been their reward.

[1] Cf. *Timaeus*, 28 C: "It is neither easy to find the Father and Maker of all, nor having found Him is it possible to declare Him to all:" quoted by Justin Martyr (*Apol. Sec.* c. x.), with the triumphant addition, "but these things our Christ did by His own power."

[2] Quoted by Abbé Cognat, *Clement d'Alexandrie*, p. 38.

As we have already noticed, that which gives its principal value to the ethical system of Plato is the enthusiasm for virtue that it created in the noble-minded. A purer morality than that of Homer was wedded to a purer religion. Freed from all the disfigurements of a mythology that had lost its early beauty and significance, it was prompted solely by a passion for likeness to the God in whom all that was fair and true and good met in fullest completeness. This it was that has made Plato's words the food of the highest and purest souls that the world has seen, and his philosophy truly what Clement calls it, "the gift of God given to the Greeks, for He is the author of all things fair[1]."

The analytical genius of Aristotle was not likely to err in the same direction as the poetically constructive mind of Plato. The *ὁμοίωσις τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δύνατον* might be a splendid imagination of the end of man. The existence of an ideal beauty and goodness was a grand conception. But his concern was with things as he found them lying about him: and here he discovered no striving after likeness to a Being whose very personality was doubtful,—no proof of the existence of these ideas on which his great predecessor had based his philosophy. He saw that every action, every speculation of the men around him, was directed to some end which was good either in itself or as

[1] *Stromata*, I. 5.

being the means to some other end. He set himself to find out what the one final good was, to which all action and thought converged; and after examining and rejecting other explanations, among others that of Plato, that it lay in the repeated vision of an ideal good, he determined it to be happiness. For this is the only thing which men pursue without a view to anything beyond it, but purely for its own sake, and this alone is of itself sufficient to satisfy all their needs. It is τελεῖον and αὐταρκές, qualities which Plato had already declared must be found in the chief good. It follows to define happiness. Aristotle found that as every animal and even every thing had its own peculiar function, so man had his; which lay in a conscious activity of the soul (his highest and distinguishing part), in accordance with the law of its own excellence, and under adequate external conditions. Each term in this definition is made the subject of a discussion, and its right to a place in it determined by a searching analysis. Then the crucial question arises what this law of the soul's highest excellence (ἀρετή) is. A psychology closely akin to that of Plato is employed to show that the soul attains excellence in two departments, that of the intellect and that of the conscience respectively: and these are henceforth separately discussed. It is shown that virtue is no part of our original constitution, but is acquired: that permanent ethical capabilities are generated by uniform and persistent practice. Then dividing the qualities of the

soul into three kinds, passions (*πάθη*), capacities (*δυνάμεις*), and fixed states (*ἕξεις*), he determines that virtue belongs to the last; that it must be accompanied by deliberate moral choice; and that its tendency is always to aim at a mean relative to us. What this mean is must be determined by reason, and as the judicious man would determine it[1]. After establishing this formula, the greater part of his treatise on ethics is taken up with the application of it to special duties, with the exception of a portion of the last book, which discusses in what course of conduct the greatest happiness lies. In the former there is nothing on which in this very brief sketch we can afford to dwell, except that he is careful to avoid Plato's extension of the meaning of *justice*. With him, as we have seen, it was the *lawful*, including all obedience and in fact all moral virtue. But now it was restricted to the fair and equitable as regards property. The nearest approach to Plato's idea of the just man is probably to be found in the very fine picture of the high-minded man. "High-mindedness appears to be as it were a sort of crown of the virtues; it enhances them and cannot come into existence without them: hence it is hard to be high-minded in the true sense of the term; for this is impossible without accomplished excellence[2]." The high-minded man does not

[1] *Eth. Nic.* II. 6. 15: Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡρισμένῃ λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν.

[2] *Eth. Nic.* IV. c. 4.

court danger but rather shuns it, because there are but few things for which he has a value; but where he does incur it he is prodigal of his life, as knowing that there are terms on which it is not worth his while to live. He cares intensely for the honour that comes from the noble, but scorns such as is given by ordinary people, and on trifling grounds, because it does not come up to his deserts. He values himself very highly and at the same time justly. He gives favours readily, but is very unwilling to accept them. He is proud to the great, but affable to the humble; open in his dislikes, and in his likings; careful for reality rather than for appearance; and fearless in his words and actions because of his contempt for others. He does not bear malice, seeing that remembering wrongs is no part of high-mindedness. He attempts only great and important matters, thinking all others unworthy of himself. Such is the character in whom, as Sir A. Grant justly says, the moral philosophy of Aristotle culminates. We shall have occasion immediately to examine this picture more carefully. But first we will complete our view of the system of which it is the highest outcome, by considering the account of happiness given in the tenth book of the Nicomachean Ethics. It was seen above that to this end all the actions of men are consciously or unconsciously directed. But what is it which answers to the definition whose meaning in every single term has now been apprehended? What is the conscious activity

of the soul in accordance with its own highest excellence, which is to be the end in itself to all men's strivings and yearnings? It must be the action of the highest faculty; for this alone is choiceworthy on its own account: amusement and bodily pleasure are precluded, inasmuch as neither can be said to be in accordance with the highest excellence of man. This highest faculty is pure intellect: its action is the most continuous, self-sufficing, absolutely final and independent of circumstances. It is the bliss of the gods, to whom we cannot assign moral actions: and though it is not given to any man to enjoy it constantly, his happiness lies in repetitions of moments of it as often as possible, his wisdom in so framing his life as to secure it[1].

In looking back upon the ethical views of Aristotle as a whole, we are struck with astonishment at the wonderful analytic power which they display. Before his time ethics as a science had no existence, and we may almost say that it sprung from his brain like Athena from the head of Zeus fully developed and fully armed. It seems at first sight as if none of the phenomena of human life have escaped his keen eye; and that a marvellous intuition has detected, amid the seemingly confused and inexplicable whirl of busy struggling men, the one force which is speeding them

[1] The preceding sketch of Aristotle's system has been drawn almost entirely from the Nicomachean Ethics, with Sir A. Grant's Notes and Essays.

each in his own career. But a closer examination will show us faults which render this wonderful production of human genius quite unfit to be the system of morality for the world. First and foremost of these we may notice the utter absence of a theory of duty. "All that relates to the moral will is with him only in its infancy[1]." He sees that men are striving after something, which can only be attained by obedience to the law of their own highest excellence: and what this is he undertakes to show; but why it should be pursued, and whence strength may be drawn to endeavour after its attainment, he does not care to discuss. Virtue is with him purely self-regarding; as Neander has well observed, his highest conception of excellence is the culmination of the ancient standpoint of the autonomy of self-consciousness[2]. As there is no objective sanction to morality, so neither is there any objective criterion. Some help is given towards this by his doctrine that virtue is a mean; but then the mean is relative and varying; and where it lies in particular instances is to be decided by right reason, and as the man of practical wisdom would decide it. But the question who is possessed of this practical wisdom is one which can be only decided by the sentiment of the community. It is therefore to this that the ultimate appeal is practically made. When

[1] Grant, I. 212.

[2] Neander, *Theol. Vorlesungen*, V. p. 102.

we come to consider his treatment of individual virtues we shall find the effects of this want of the conception of an external moral law. Take for instance the picture of the character of the high-minded man already given. It is hardly needful to point out how opposed some of his traits are to the Christian standard of perfection. There is no esteeming others better than himself: no condescending to men of low estate. But besides this, with all the admiration which we are compelled to feel at this portrait of a gallant Athenian gentleman, very probably painted from life, we cannot help seeing that there must be something imperfect in the conception that a man so perfectly self-satisfied has of the requirements of the moral law. "The consciousness of dependence on God as the keynote of the whole life, that in which the very being of true freedom is rooted, the consciousness of personal unworthiness with regard to the claims of the moral law, the consciousness that man has no gift, no virtue which he has not received, all this is utterly wanting to the high-minded man[1]." It was not wanting to the high-minded Homeric heroes: far less is it wanting in the ideal that has been given to man in Christ[2].

But the standard that Aristotle adopted was not

[1] Neander, u. s. p. 102. There are some interesting remarks on the attempt of St Thomas Aquinas to reconcile *μεγαλοψυχία* with the Christian conception of virtue, in the same work. pp. 301—303.

[2] Jeremy Taylor quaintly says: "Humility is as needful to great men as to idiots" (=*ἰδιώταις*).

likely to lead him to satisfactory views as to the higher virtues. Actions whose rightness or wrongness may be determined quantitatively can be estimated by a proper application of the canon of the mean. Wherever it is purely a question of beauty or proportion, as the Greeks were apt to make every moral obligation[1], what amount of excess or defect mars these qualities can be decided by the man of practical wisdom. But just as in wines there is a principle which defies the chemist's analysis, and yet is the sole cause of the aroma and bouquet of the liquor, so in many virtues there is an element which quite baffles all quantitative measurement, and yet makes them what they are. In truth, humility, charity, and the forgiveness of injuries, Sir A. Grant thinks that "that which is superadded to the quality of the mean is a certain self-abnegation." This duty is intimately related to that of self-preservation, inasmuch as both alike are based upon the idea that life and all its blessings are gifts of God, to be held in absolute submission to his will[2]. The Christian view cannot be stated in better words than those of Justin Martyr when the Pagans asked why the Christians never shunned death at the hands of their persecutors, and yet refused to commit suicide; "I will tell you why we do not do that, and yet acknowledge ourselves to be Christians whenever any man asks

[1] Grant, I. 210. [2] Neander, 4. s. 153.

us. We have learnt that God has not made the world without a purpose; but for the sake of the race of men. If we Christians then lay hands upon ourselves, we should have the guilt that the purpose of the divine creation would be rendered vain, that no more would be born and made disciples of the divine doctrine, yea, that the race of men would have no stability; we should be acting against the will of God if we did so[1]." The same submission to the divine will would ensure the surrender of all possessions and all desires, if it was called for. Now this conception did not enter at all into the scheme of Aristotle. He does indeed speak with a kind of instinctive contempt of suicides: "To die for the sake of escaping poverty, or love, or any annoyance, is not the part of a brave man, but rather of a coward." But the other aspect of this two-fold duty is quite unknown to him. The fullest development of the individual being his end-in-itself, he would not enjoin, nay he would rather proscribe any course of conduct which would hinder this. Hence virtues involving self-abnegation are hardly recognized by him[2]. We have seen how little importance he attaches to humility; the truthfulness which is a form of justice, and not merely a mean between boastfulness and over-modesty, he does not treat of: charity and the forgiveness of injuries are altogether

[1] *Apolog. Sec.* I. 4. [2] Grant, I. p. 210.

beyond the pale of his virtues. An attempt has recently been made by Mr Bain[1] to show that self-sacrifice was not so completely lost sight of as has been commonly imagined; that it finds a place under courage, and again under friendship. "Inasmuch," he says, "as the leading form of heroic devotion in the ancient world was exposure of life in war, self-sacrifice was presented under the guise of courage, and had no independent standing as a cardinal virtue. From this circumstance Paganism is made to appear in a somewhat disadvantageous light as regards self-denying duties." But surely so acute an analyst as Aristotle would not have overlooked the fact that self-sacrifice presents itself a thousand times more frequently in matters of smaller importance than in risking life on behalf of another. If he had had anything approaching to a due idea of its importance in ethics, he would not have contented himself with implying it in a somewhat doubtful manner, under the colour of a different virtue. For after all is there any high self-sacrifice in the courage which has been spoken of? The brave man risks a life which is eminently happy by reason of his virtue; but he does so that he may not lose just that which makes his life thus happy, and the certain loss of which by cowardice would cost him far more pain than the possible loss of all other good things. Again, in the

[1] *Mental and Moral Science*, pp. 489 and 506.

case of friendship, whatever self-sacrifice there may be involved in Aristotle's conception of the duties it renders imperative, is due, after all, to an enlightened self-interest. For every reason chooses that which is best for itself[1], and a good man obeys his reason. "It is true also of a good man that on behalf of his friends and his country he does much, even if he cannot die on their account, for he will cast aside money, honours, in short all good things about which men fight, and claim for himself the noble. For he would prefer to enjoy intense delight for a short time rather than quiet pleasure for a long time." Still we gladly admit that we have here some foreshadowing of the great law of self-sacrifice for the good of others, whose majestic supremacy was never acknowledged fully till men had seen it fulfilled to the uttermost in the great Example.

Some special defects in the system of Aristotle have been referred to, but we have yet to notice its cardinal imperfection. Even more than the teaching of Plato it is exposed to the charge of being a morality for a class, and not for mankind. The sole fact of the superior importance which it gave to the intellectual over the moral virtues is sufficient to justify the accusation. For the former are necessarily confined for the most part to those who have leisure and a competence, and have enjoyed a thorough

[1] *Eth. Nic.* IX. 8, §§ 8—10.

education; the latter are within the reach of the poorest and the most ignorant. But what message of hope and strength could be brought to these by a philosophy which placed the chief good in a contemplation for which they had neither the faculty, the opportunity, nor the inclination?

The effect of this narrowness of view was seen in many ways. We need allude only to the questions of slavery and international relations. The former, Aristotle like Plato maintained must continue to exist, as based upon the natural unlikeness between men[1]. Yet there is no barbarity in his way of viewing it. He says indeed, "there is no friendship possible with a horse, or an ox, or a slave regarded as a slave[2]. The slave is an animated tool, the tool an inanimate slave;" but he adds, "regarded as man, it is quite possible to feel friendship towards him." One of the legitimate causes for war is, in his view, to be the masters of those who by nature deserve to be slaves[3]. And in this number he would include all barbarians[4]. How fatal this is to any ideas of international morality or unity is seen at once; but it is worth noticing, as one of those many undeveloped rudimentary hints of higher conceptions than any explicitly unfolded, which are often found in Plato and Aristotle, that he seems to have caught a dim

[1] *Pol.* I. 3. 7.
[2] *Eth. Nic.* VIII. 11. 6.
[3] *Pol.* IV. [VII.] 14. 22.
[4] Ibid. III. 14. 6.

glimpse of the notion of communities bound together by mutual good-will superseding law. "It seems, too, that friendship holds together states, and that legislators are more anxious to secure this than justice, and if men are friends, there is no need of justice; but if they are just, they stand in need of friendship besides[1]." We may be permitted in a saying like this to see at least some half unconscious foreshadowing of that highest point of Christian development, in which perfect love so animates all, that the bonds of law are no longer needed[2].

"In Flaxman's drawing of the Eumenides of Æschylus, Orestes supplicates Apollo, while the Furies sleep on the threshold. The face of the god expresses a shade of regret and compassion, but calm with the conviction of the irreconcileableness of the two spheres. He is born into other politics, into the Eternal and Beautiful. The man at his feet asks for his interest in turmoils of the earth into which his nature cannot enter[3]." Whether this be the Apollo of Æschylus may be doubted: it is certain that it is a god from the Pantheon of Aristotle. That fear of anthropomorphism, which has always been the bugbear of pure philosophy, cast its blighting influence over his whole conceptions of the Deity. "We have assumed," he says, "that the gods are preemi-

[1] *Eth. Nic.* IX. 1.

[2] See a yet more striking passage in the *Politics* (Neander, u. s. 100).

[3] Emerson's *Collected Works*, I. 189.

nently blessed and happy. But what kind of actions may we ascribe to them? Just actions? Nay, but they will appear ridiculous if we conceive them making contracts or returning deposits, or doing any other deeds of this nature. Or brave actions, enduring dangers, and exposing themselves to risks for a noble cause? Or liberal actions? Why, to whom will they give gifts? It would be absurd if they had money or anything of that nature. And wherein could their self-control consist? Surely praise for this would be beneath them, for they have no base appetites. So by going through all the virtues, we should see that whatever relates to moral actions is petty and unworthy of the gods[1]." To say nothing of the imperfect ideas of justice and benevolence here incidentally revealed, how low that conception of virtue must be that makes it no part of the character of the supremely Good! What a contrast to the view of St Paul, who felt that in all his life of unvarying self-sacrifice for the good of his fellow-men, he was God's fellow-worker[2]; that all his longing for the deliverance of his brethren from the power of evil, was but the faintest reflection of the love with which the Eternal Father was yearning over his erring children! How infinite the difference between the "moral dynamic force" that the two conceptions would exert!

[1] *Eth. Nic.* x. 8. 7.

[2] Θεοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί (1 Cor. iii. 9; cf. 2 Cor. vi. 1).

In comparing the systems of Plato and Aristotle respectively with the Christian ideal, we are inclined at first to give the preeminence in every respect to the former. This fundamental principle seems to approach far more nearly to that which is the mainspring of the Gospel; both are based upon the striving of the human after the divine; in both the attitude of the disciple is the same,

> From the gift looking up to the giver,
> From the cistern to the river,
> From the finite to infinity,
> And from man's dust to God's Divinity.

And the conception of the latter is not wholly unworthy of a system which has received greater enlightenment from above. The error with which Aristotle charges him in having gone beyond the realm of the human in search of the Highest Good, is to us his crowning merit, and we feel with Augustine, "Platonici mutatis verbis paucis et sententiis Christiani fieri possunt[1]." But we must not lose sight of the fact that Aristotle keeps firm hold of the real, which Plato often neglects in his quest of the ideal. Both make their ethics run up into politics, and find in the perfection of the state the necessary condition for the perfection of the individual. But

[1] *De vera relig.* c. 5. Schwarz (*Ethik*, u. s. p. 81) has gathered together many passages which strikingly resemble phrases in the Holy Scriptures.

the perfect state of Plato is an impracticable ideal, and there must be something at fault in an ethical conception which requires for its realisation conditions here impossible [cf. p. 46]. The views of Aristotle do not include that which we hold to be the highest ideal of man's life, but so far as they go they are directed to the attainment of what is here possible. The wisdom of the one grasps at ennobling conceptions which it is impossible to reach, though the striving after them is itself the highest life for man. The practical prudence of the other prefers to deal with the facts of life as he finds them, and by a subtle and comprehensive analysis ascertain wherein the highest relative good is to be discovered. The former is more helpful to us in our search for a "moral dynamic." The elaboration of the virtuous character by the formation of good habits is a long and slow process. Does Aristotle point to any spring of inspiration which may carry a man through it? Plato after his own fashion does. Far off and inaccessible as his idea of the good may be, there is something in it, and in his enthusiasm for it, which must kindle as by contagion all but the dullest; but in Aristotle, though at every turn you meet insights into human nature which you feel to be penetratingly true, you are after all left to evolve the virtuous habit out of your own inward resources. There is in him no pointing to anything which may come home to a man inwardly, and supplement his moral weakness

by a strength beyond his own[1]. Yet we must not suppose that later generations owed a debt of gratitude to Plato only. "If the system of Aristotle was further distant from Christianity than that of Plato, he rendered even greater service, by presenting his views in a form of which Christian science afterwards made so large use in its enquiries and dogmatic statements[2]." And if the moral enthusiasm of the one has the more power to stir the soul to the love of goodness, we may not overlook the noble intellectual elevation of the other. "We are not to listen," he says, "to those who urge us as human to think only of the human, as mortal to think only of the mortal, but it becomes us as far as possible to play the immortal, and to do all the actions of life with reference to the noblest part of our being; for though it be small in bulk, yet in power and dignity it far surpasses all the other portions of our nature[3]." We have seen how this is intellect purely; how practical morality is despised in comparison, as belonging in part to the lower passions, as needing circumstances in which to display it, and as being unworthy of the gods. But from its own stand-point we may perhaps regard it with Neander[4], "as the highest flight of the spirit of antiquity, which would fain

[1] Prof. Shairp's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, pp. 382—3.
[2] Kurtz, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 50 (E. T.).
[3] *Eth. Nic.* x. 7. 8.
[4] *Geschichte der Christliche Ethik*, p. 87.

escape from the limits within which it is confined, but cannot of its own strength break through these limits, an unconscious kind of yearning, which out of the curse which no man's hand can loose, is fighting its way to meet the gospel." The very elevation of soul of Aristotle would not suffer him to form any other conception of the chief good for man, because he knew of no other connexion between the actions of men and the actions of God. "But still how mournful were the lot of man, if the human and the divine were so severed, as they must have appeared to Aristotle from the stand-point of antiquity. Then the far greater number of men were shut out from the highest, the properly divine. The spirit could only arrive at its true dignity in a very small number who might be fit for science[1]." It would be impossible to find more suitable words wherewith to close this brief survey of two of the greatest of human thinkers, than those of the illustrious scholar and divine, who has been often referred to already. Neander writes: "From the Christian stand-point we shall say indeed with Aristotle, we must not as they exhort us, as being men, content ourselves with the merely human, the trivial, that which belongs to the transient, we must strive after a higher good, above the human. But we shall then add, in Christ we recognize the Divine Incarnate. In all spheres of human

[1] Neander, l. c.

life, we must reveal the Divine. There is nothing human now, severed from the Divine; all is to be illumined by the Divine. Our task is not merely contemplation but life. Contemplation and life ought to bring the Divine into the human. But this highest task belongs not merely to a certain small privileged number among men, but it is the common task of all Christians in whatever sphere of life they may find themselves. In our knowledge of the kingdom of God, we recognize this higher sphere for the divine action as a human one, and the human as a divine. The highest is no longer the egoistic standpoint of a self-satisfied contemplation, that feels itself happy in its isolation, but the stand-point of a love which grasps at nothing for itself, strives to share all with others, and reveals a Divine life in self-denial for the needs of all. We know the God who was not revealed to Aristotle, the God who is love. So if we contemplate that which was most sublime in antiquity, yet more sublime appears to us Christianity in its servant's guise of love[1]."

The fascination which the names of Plato and Aristotle, "i maestri di color che sanno," exercise over all earnest students of the thoughts of men, has kept us lingering too long it may be over their ethical systems. For neither of these is that with which we have more particularly to compare the Christian

[1] *Christliche Ethik*, pp. 88, 89.

ethics; the men were greater than their systems; and in the hands of lesser men ethical science was permitted to attain a more perfect theoretical development. Permitted, I say: for if we may be allowed to read the purposes of God in history, it was not without design that such a height of moral speculation was reached before the Advent; that men might see how little the wisdom of the wisest, the strength of the strongest could help them; and so they might be ready to receive with grateful hearts the wisdom and the strength of God incarnate. We must therefore pass with lighter and hastier steps over what remains of the path along which men were pressing to a loftier morality, until we reach its highest point before its union with the high-way of heavenly truth.

An offshoot like the Platonic philosophy from the teaching of Socrates, but taking its origin in a far less accurate grasp of the master's meaning, the Cyrenaic system "considered enjoyment the only end in itself, and happiness the only unconditional good. Everything else appeared to its founder good and desirable only in as far as it was a means to enjoyment[1]." Individual feelings of pleasure were the ends of all actions; and the pleasures and pains of the body more acute than those of the mind. "The Kyrenians did not admit that there was anything just, or honourable or base by nature, but only by law and

[1] Zeller, *Socrates and the Socratic Schools* (trans. Reichel), p. 295.

custom; nevertheless the wise man would be sufficiently restrained by the fear of punishment and discredit from doing what was repugnant to the society in which he lived[1]." This school is remarkable principally as being the origin of the philosophy of Epicurus; but with neither the one nor the other does our present purpose require us to concern ourselves at any length. Whatever may have been the morality of the teachers, and that of Epicurus confessedly stands very high[2], there can be no reasonable doubt that the influence of their dogmas was for evil rather than good. Men would readily remember that pain was the only evil, pleasure the only good; while they forgot that "it was impossible to live pleasantly without living wisely, nobly and justly[3]." Hence we have no right to doubt the assertion made by one of the most accurate observers among the Greeks, that bad faith was a result of adhesion to his philosophy[4]. There were indeed those of his school who maintained that it was more pleasant to confer a benefit than to receive one[5]; but we cannot conceive of him extending the idea of the virtue needful for a pleasant

[1] Grote's *Plato and other Companions of Socrates*, Vol. III. p. 553.

[2] See the passages quoted by Zeller from Seneca, *Phil. der Griechen*, III. 1. 407.

[3] Cf. Zeller, l. c. (note 1).

[4] *Polyb.* VI. c. 64, quoted by Hume, *Dialogue on Natural Religion*, (1st ed.), p. 146.

[5] *Plutarch*, quoted by Zeller, III. 1, p. 422.

life, so as to embrace any noble conception of self-sacrifice.

It is of more importance for us now to notice that the multiplicity of sects of philosophers must have grievously impaired the influence of those among them who attained to anything like an exalted morality. We may be quite sure that there were very many who could adopt the words of Horace:

> "Nunc agilis fio et mersor civilibus undis
> virtutis vere custos rigidusque satelles:
> nunc in Aristippi furtim praecepta relabor
> et mihi res, non me rebus, subiungere conor[1]."

"Philosophy spoke without authority, and distracted with the multitude of its conflicting sects the patient yet bewildered enquirer[2]." There were many who could use the words of the unknown author of the Clementine Recognitions, prompted by a far deeper earnestness than that of Horace: "From my earliest youth I have been disturbed by doubt .... I felt there was a Heavenly Guide to lead me to truth, and I sought Him from place to place. Harassed from my youth by these thoughts I went from one school of philosophy to another, and found only opposing principles and contradictions. Here one proved to me the immortality of the soul; there an-

[1] *Epist.* I. 1. 16—19.
[2] Milman, *Hist. of Christianity* (new ed.), I. 33.

other demonstrated to me that it was mortal. Thus was I driven from doctrine to doctrine, more wretched than ever, as though I had been carried through a vortex of contradictory ideas; and I sighed from the depth of my soul[1]."

It has been remarked of all the later systems of Greek philosophy that they had their origin in despair. True of all the varied schools that put forth their claims upon the allegiance of the degenerate successors of those who had listened to Socrates and Plato, this is especially true of the Stoics. Weary of the endless metaphysical subtleties of the later Academics, which ended only in a universal scepticism[2], they abandoned all attempt to attain to truth by means of dialectics. "Give me the doctrines," said Chrysippus to his master Cleanthes, "and I will find you the demonstrations." Dialectics instead of being the royal road to knowledge, as with Plato, was but the defence of dogma against assailants from without. It was the shell of the egg, of which ethics and physics formed the contents[3]. Yet the position of the Stoics was a protest quite as much against the scepticism of

[1] *Clem. Recog. ad init.* Cf. Pressensé, *Jésus Christ*, p. 60; *Histoire*, &c. I. 248.

[2] See Cicero's *Academics*, passim.

[3] Maurice, *Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 241—2. There is some doubt as to which of the two was the yolk and which the white; Sextus and Diogenes Laertius give different statements: cf. Zeller (III. 1, p. 57, note 1), who explains the varying importance attached to ethics and physics from different stand-points, on p. 56.

the Pyrrhonists as against that of the Academics. Making due allowance for the different conditions of the time, we may compare their position to that of Kant, as opposed alike to Hume and Reid. While refusing to rest in the results of pure intellect as affording no certain ground to stand on, they restored objective definiteness to their tenets by an unswerving adhesion to virtue, which may be compared with Kant's use of the categorical imperative of the practical reason. Whatever might be the unsatisfactory results of pure dialectics, at least one thing remained unshaken, the obligation to live according to the law of one's being (*τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ζῆν*). But this "living according to nature," though apparently identical with the Epicurean canon of life, was in reality far different. Infinitely nobler and more elevated ideas about the character and destiny of man were implied, than any which can be drawn from the doctrines of the philosophers of the Garden. These are due doubtless in great measure to the Eastern origin and connexions of many of the leading Stoical thinkers[1]: but we may venture to believe that there was nobleness enough yet left among the Greeks to make a reaction against the eudæmonism of the Cyrenaics and Epicurus certain under any circumstances. The natural life

[1] Cf. Lightfoot's *Philippians*, pp. 271 and 297; Grant, I. 246; Zeller, u. s. p. 26: "The important Stoics of ante-Christian times by birth belong almost all to Asia Minor, Syria and the isles of the Eastern Archipelago."

of the Epicurean was one in which the passions and desires should have free play within the bounds which a prudent self-interest would fix; the "life according to Nature" of the Stoics was a stern subjection of all else to the laws of abstract thought. Nature is not with them the constitution of man, but of the universe: hence the importance attached to physics as that which is "the scientific preparation for ethics[1]." No ethical subject, said Chrysippus, can be rightly approached, except by the previous consideration of entire nature, and the ordering of the whole. The laws which regulate the abstract and universal order are to be discovered by reason; and then these are to be followed out by each individual, regardless of his own personal impulses and wishes. These laws the wise man perceives and implicitly obeys. Thus being in harmony with the Cosmos nothing can harm him: he enjoys all true wealth, power and freedom; others are but beggars and slaves, however great their apparent good fortune[2]. It is true that no such ideally wise man exists[3]; man walks in wickedness all his days, or at least the greater part of them: and if he ever attain to virtue, it is late and at the close of life[4]. Still this is the object to be set before all men, this the ideal which they are to attempt to realise, convinced that in its realisation lies the supreme good for

[1] Zeller, p. 190.
[2] Cf. Cic. *Paradox.* passim, and Zeller, pp. 231—233.
[3] Grant, I. p. 261. [4] *Sextus*, ap. Zeller, p. 233.

them. For only thus can they secure the *ἀταραξία*, the *εὔροια βίου*, than which nothing higher can be desired. And if the perfect attainment of this condition is impossible, at least there may be a constant advance (*προκοπή*) towards it[1], which is to be made a subject of repeated self-examination, that the philosopher may be sure that he is in the right road towards the supreme good at which he is aiming.

It is evident that this mode of regarding ethics was attended by many advantages of great importance. In the first place an objective standard was at least apparently secured. To the Epicurean the study of physics could give little pleasure, because the fixity of law therein revealed clashed with the adaptation to circumstances and accidents, in which he placed his chief good. But the Stoic wished to rise above circumstances, to subject them to himself, and by obedience to win the rule. Both alike had lost the real law and standard for man, but the Stoic appeared to find a substitute for it in the invariable sequence of natural phænomena[2]. To "live according to Nature" could not indeed be a sufficient rule of conduct, while the knowledge of the real nature of the world and man was so imperfect[3]. A materialistic theology issuing in pantheism[4], a psychology based upon an utterly unnatural theory of pleasure and pain could

[1] Grant, I. p. 261.
[2] Maurice, *Ancient Philosophy*, p. 243.
[3] Neander, u. s. p. 33.
[4] Zeller, u. s. 106 ff.

hardly be expected to supply a practically efficient rule of life. But at least it was better far to hold that the good was determined by considerations entirely independent of the pain or pleasure of the individual than to make these the standard. But the Stoical system drove its adherents either to numberless inconsistencies[1] or else to paradoxical assertions which deprived their originators of half their influence. Their resolve to confine the name of good to that which is in harmony with and indeed produces the order of nature and human society, led them into subtle definitions of other objects of universal desire as προηγμένα, things to be preferred, which made them appear as mere jugglers with words[2]. Nay more, their tenet that short of perfect virtue, to which they allowed that none attained, all faults and vices were equal, might seem to strike a death-blow at all attempts at self-improvement. And their very endeavour to establish an objective standard of right and wrong was far from successful. Prof. Maurice, in his characteristically brief and hostile sketch of Stoical ethics, appears to go somewhat too far in asserting that the Stoic in carrying out his conception respecting virtue disconnected it entirely from every dream of an Absolute Good[3]. Zeller's account is as follows: "As in

[1] Plutarch has collected many instances of these, chiefly from the writings of Chrysippus, in his little tract *De Repugnantia Stoicorum.*

[2] Lord Macaulay has brought this aspect out in a well-known passage in his essay on Bacon.

[3] p. 241.

all moral philosophy since Socrates, so with the Stoics the enquiry as to the destiny and moral task of man is closely connected with the question of the conception of the Good, and the constituents of the highest Good or Happiness. But this they believe is only to be sought in activity directed by reason, or virtue; the fundamental principle of actions of all beings is self-preservation and self-love. From this it follows at once that the object of every being's exertion, that which has value for it, is that which is in accordance with its nature; that consequently the highest good and the highest end, or happiness, can only lie in a life according to nature. But that alone can be in accordance with nature for the individual, which harmonizes with the course and law of the universe, or with the universal world-reason; that alone is in accordance with nature for a conscious and intelligent being, which proceeds from the recognition of this universal law and from an intelligent perception of it[1]." Universal law and absolute good to Theists like the Stoics are surely nearly identical. But the conduct which was in harmony with the law of the Cosmos was left to be decided too much by the individual[2]. Hence the system was "too wanting in objective ele-

[1] u. s. pp. 191—193.

[2] The want of an objective standard and criterion in Stoicism is forcibly stated by a writer who cannot be accused of any prejudice in favour of Christian ethics—Mr R. W. Mackay, *Progress of the Intellect*, &c. I. 487.

ments, it had too little to draw men out of themselves ever to satisfy the human spirit, ever to be otherwise than very imperfect.....The development of the subjective element of morality necessary for the deepening of the thoughts of the world was overdone by the Stoics, and they supplied nothing in counterbalance[1]."

The most prominent conception in the system we have seen is the effort to attain a perfect life in conformity to universal law; and the calmness and sternness with which this is enjoined must have acted as a wholesome tonic in the midst of the self-willed libertinism of Hellenic decadence. And from this feeling of the unity of the order of universal nature another idea resulted of yet greater importance in the development of ethics. Man was regarded no longer as a constituent portion of some Hellenic community merely, but as a member of the general Cosmos. Hence we find a very wide cosmopolitanism forming a prominent feature in the Stoical system. Zeno even ventured to look forward to a time, when men should no longer live in cities and nations, divided from each other by their own special laws, but all should hold all as fellow-countrymen and fellow-citizens: and there should be one life, one order, as that of a flock feeding together under a common law[2]. But of the One Shepherd by whose living rule alone this unity could

[1] Grant, I. p. 272. Cf. Neander, u. s. p. 32.

[2] Plutarch, quoted with striking comments by Neander, u. s. p. 34.

be accomplished, Zeno knew nothing. His Pantheism gave him only the notion of a material irresistible fate. And this very cosmopolitan feeling, produced by enlightenment of the intellect alone, tended to bring about a yet wider separation of thought and feeling between the enlightened and the unenlightened[1]. The wise man of Cleanthes was absolutely pitiless and unsympathetic: caring nothing for his own pains and pleasures, he could not be expected to feel any lively interest in those of others. The affections were to him something not to be kept under control, but to be rooted up altogether; which in a virtuous soul would entirely cease[2]. It was only as later disciples of the school became inconsistent with their own fundamental principles, that we find anything approaching to a Christian idea of benevolence.

This hardness of character is one of the principal defects of Stoicism among the Greeks, but others are not wanting. The sanction which it gave to suicide stands in singularly unfavourable contrast with the noble courage of Plato, who held it cowardly for a soldier to desert the post to which he had been appointed by the Great Commander. Stoical pride was proverbial; and however regretfully some in these days may look back to the times when self-sufficience

[1] Neander, p. 36.

[2] Reinhard, *Christliche Moral*, I. p. 334, II. 301, and Cic. *pro Mur.* c. 29.

was deemed the crown of virtues[1], those are not the least enlightened and high-minded who think humility the fitting frame of mind for men who are conscious of a high ideal, and their own miserable and repeated failures to reach it. "Nothing can form a greater contrast than the humility of the believing Christian and the proud self-satisfaction of the Stoic wise man[2]." "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you[3]," is a precept which the Stoics would have rejected alike in its substance and its sanction. "Just as it is becoming for Zeus to feel pride in himself and his life and to use lofty language, seeing that he lives in a manner worthy of it, so this is becoming to all good men, over whom Zeus has no preeminence[4]." Even when the Stoical theories did not produce a pride which looked down contemptuously on others less advanced, they could not fail to have as their effect a self-consciousness and self-complacence, which are as far removed from the ideal of beautiful goodness[5]. Even in the rigid inflexibility of virtue which was its characteristic excellence, Stoicism was not free from reproach. One of the distinctive features of their ideal wise man was that he should know how

[1] Mr Swinburne in the *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. x. p. 417.
[2] Baur, *Christenthum*, I. p. 11. Cf. Neander, u. s. pp. 52, 53.
[3] Ephesians iv. 32.
[4] Plutarch, *de Repugn. Stoic.* c. 13.
[5] Grant, I. 289. Compare *Ecce Homo*, p. 114.

to lie upon occasion[1]; and they denied that any language could be obscene or unbecoming[2]. Nothing could be more at variance with the language of St Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians (v. 2, 3) than that of Zeno as reported by Cicero[3]: ὁ σοφὸς εὐθυρρημονήσει. Even many of the most disgusting vices are considered by them not contrary to nature, and therefore not to be condemned[4]. And we cannot pass over without notice the manner in which the pantheistic conception of the universe made evil the necessary and eternal accompaniment of good, the shadow inseparable from the light: "evil itself too is produced in a certain way according to the law of nature, and so to speak is not without its use with regard to the universe, for without it neither had good existed[5]." The apostle recognizes yet more fully than the philosopher the extent of the reign of evil; but he is able to add that where sin multiplied (ἐπλεόνασεν) grace exceedingly abounded (ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν), in order that as sin reigned in death, so grace might reign by righteousness unto eternal life. Is it needful to spend one word in showing the strength for daily needs that comes from the faith that the Lord of Life is stronger than death and hell: that He hates evil

[1] Reinhard, *Christliche Moral*, III. 174 B.

[2] Ibid. I. 505 C.

[3] *Ep. Div.* IX. 22, which from this point of view is well worth reading throughout.

[4] Döllinger, *Jew and Gentile*, I. 357.

[5] Plutarch, *de Repug. Stoic.* c. 35.

with an utter and undying hatred; and that by His perfect sacrifice sin and death shall be swallowed up in victory?

Finally, whatever the theoretical perfection of Stoicism might have been, in Greece it was a failure. It won the adhesion of few or no really great men[1]: and on the masses of the people it appears to have had absolutely no power for good. Probably of un-Hellenic origin and certainly pitched in a key which woke no chord in the Hellenic breast, it left the popular morality almost unaffected by its existence. We have a faithful picture of the condition of Athens at the very time when Zeno and Cleanthes were teaching there, in the fragments of the plays of the New Comedy, and the trustworthy reflections of them in Plautus and Terence. But we find there no trace of the stern and elevated morality of the Stoics. The general humanity of tone, the familiar grace of life, the voluptuous ease, the winning kindliness and sometimes enlightened philanthropy are all drawn from the school of Epicurus. The lights and the shadows of the picture are alike foreign to the sages of the Porch. One who is disposed to attach far too high a value to the Stoical system is compelled to admit that "we do not see that it has regenerated anything, changed anything in Greek society or in the world[2]."

[1] Grant, I. 246.

[2] Dénis, *Histoire des Théories et des Idées Morales*, I. 377.

"Christianity alone was able to turn into a passion that which Stoicism had vainly and imperfectly preached as a duty, and to make the mere tie of common humanity stronger than ever had been the law of kindred or of country. Like Stoicism, Christianity met material force with altogether spiritual weapons. But it did not, like Stoicism, merely resign and endure. It not only defended the individual against the world; it enabled him to invade it in his turn. The Stoics had shown that force could not injure spirit: the Christian showed that spirit can conquer force[1]." Mr Maurice has warned us against "those who seem to think that the proof of the divine origin and worth of Christianity depends upon the mean estimate which we form of all the wise men whom Greece produced in its best days[2]." We need not be of this number. We may and ought to find much that is admirable even in those that were the product of her more degenerate days, much in the Stoical spirit which is even necessary to the highest conception of morality. We must not forget "how it held up the delights of an inner life as preferable to all tangible and palpable enjoyments however innocent they might be.....how it drew the mind away from external realities, into an abstract ideal; how it delighted in the conception of moral progress and the triumph of the will; how it developed the thought of

[1] *North British Review*, March 1866, p. 291.
[2] *Kingdom of Christ*, I. 447.

duty and the responsibility of the individual[1]." And yet we must admit that Stoicism failed entirely to keep alight the flame of enthusiasm for virtue, that had flashed up for a moment beneath the magic breath of Plato, and died back into its embers under his followers' care. We can no more concede to the philosophers of the Porch than to those of the Academy the praise of having established a sure and perfect system of ethics, based upon a pure foundation and fortified by adequate sanctions. What further development of power and completeness their doctrines reached in the new home to which they were transferred, a home in many points far more kindly to them, must be discussed in the following chapter.

But before we leave Greece altogether it will be worth while to glance rapidly at the popular ethics of the time, as distinguished from those of the Schools. We have these mirrored in the New Comedy; and I have already referred to the genial humanity and kindliness of tone for which this was distinguished. It is fair to allow all due weight to this "sentiment of the universal conscience," of which M. Denis informs us that Stoicism was only "the full and distinct expression, the logical and dogmatic manifestation[2]." But at the same time the picture which is presented by this gay and kindly comedy is at bottom a profoundly sad one. Everything distinctly Greek was

[1] Grant, I. p. 303.

[2] *Histoire*, &c. I. 376.

expiring: fatherland, national faith, domestic life, all nobleness of action and of sentiment were gone: poetry, history, and philosophy were inwardly exhausted; and nothing remained to the Athenian but the school, the fish-market and the brothel. Moral common-places and well-turned ethical maxims abound; but beneath all the polish and elegance a dreary abyss is yawning. "The coarseness and obscenities, which Menander indeed in some measure avoided, but of which there is no lack in the other poets, are the least part of the evil. Features far worse are the dreadful aspect of life as a desert, in which the only oases are love-making and intoxication, the perfectly prosaic monotony, in which anything resembling enthusiasm is to be found only among the sharpers, whose heads have been turned by their own swindling, and above all that immoral morality with which the pieces of Menander in particular are garnished[1]." Such is the description given by one of the ablest of living secular historians; the picture of the condition of Greece at this time, as painted in greater detail by the most learned and liberal of Romanist divines, is absolutely sickening in the frightful moral corruption that it reveals[2]. It was not merely that an inadequate standard of morals was set up, or that the precepts drawn from it were in some respects imperfect, but there seemed

[1] Mommsen, Vol. II. pp. 427, 428.

[2] Döllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, Vol. II. pp. 217—247.

to be no desire whatever to acknowledge any standard. Death, moral and spiritual, was fast enveloping the land where in earlier years Plato had preached and Aristotle taught; and the first pulse of life that stirred in its veins was aroused when a Jew from Tarsus proclaimed in the forum of Athens to "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and the Stoics" Jesus and the Resurrection.

By your beauty which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses
Through your falsehood at the True,—
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

E. B. BROWNING.

CHAPTER III.

PAGAN ETHICS AT THE PERIOD OF THEIR GREATEST PERFECTION.

Stoicism—its complete development in Rome—Character of the Roman morality—Decline and subsequent revival of Stoicism—Seneca—his character and philosophy—wherein defective—Epictetus—the beauty of his life and his teaching—his piety and elevated morality—not without faults—unnatural—inconsistent—powerless—Marcus Aurelius—perhaps the most perfect of Pagans—his faith purely personal—the failure of all philosophical systems to be at once scientific, complete and powerful.

IT is admitted universally that the most perfect and developed type of Stoicism is to be found in Rome. "For the Greeks, conception; for the Romans, realization," cries a living writer[1]. Whatever measure

[1] Denis, u. s. II. p. 423.

of truth there may be in this saying as applied to other subjects, at least in the case of the Stoical philosophy its justice cannot be denied. Much was doubtless owing to the Oriental character of its leading tenets, much to the degenerate nature of those to whom it was preached in Hellas. But the fact remains certain, that only in Rome it struck the deepest root and bore the richest fruit. "For it is not with morality as with metaphysics: it must spread and pass into laws and manners to become the common patrimony of the human race[1]." This the Stoical system never succeeded in doing in Greece: to a certain extent it did in Rome. To understand its workings there aright, it is needful first to consider briefly the prevalent moral ideas and the ethical condition of the society into which it was introduced. The most prominent feature of the Roman as opposed to the Hellenic genius was the desire to rest upon some purely external order, inwoven with all the relations of life and independent of the conceptions and ideas of men[2]. There was nothing creative or imaginative in their religion; no play was allowed to the individual fancy[3]. But while this gave a dull and sombre complexion to their worship on the one hand, it saved them on the

[1] Denis, II. p. 4.

[2] Prof. Maurice, *Edinburgh Lectures* (in *Learning and Working*), p. 227.

[3] Mommsen, I. p. 180.

other from the licentious abominations that resulted from the exuberance of the Hellenic imagination. The authority of the Supreme Father was typified in that of the paterfamilias; and on a purely and sternly regulated family life, sustained by the sanctions of religion, the greatness of the state was founded[1]. The object of prayer was not the communion of the reason with the supremely Wise and Good, but the securing of certain temporal blessings by the employment of the due formulæ. This practical aspect of religion brought it within the comprehension of all; the moral relations which were consecrated by it embraced the lowest; the moral duties which it enjoined were as incumbent upon the most ignorant as upon the wisest. And so Rome, though never rising to the level of the highest religious thought, was saved from the curse of an aristocracy of intellect, which fatally impaired the moral life of Hellas[2]. The loss to each single citizen in variety of free development and graceful individuality was doubtless large; but the greatness of the state that was thereby purchased was not without its results of good to all its several members. The Roman *gravitas* did not exclude many grievous faults, even from the moral point of view. Pride, hard-heartedness, even faithlessness towards foreigners, are not alien to it. But if it does not embrace the whole

[1] See Robertson's second Advent Lecture.

[2] Mommsen, I. pp. 185 and 471.

of virtue, it presents us with some of its most important and needful portions.

But at least a century and a half before the fall of the republic this character was growing rare. The influence of uninterrupted success, of wealth and Eastern luxury, above all of the supreme curse of slave-holding, had undermined its original simplicity. Unbelief and immorality, as usual acting and reacting on each other, were desolating the Roman homes. The early religion, a religion of the strictest veracity, fidelity, and honesty, the foundation on which the greatness of the old republican time was reared[1], and on which the whole life of the constitution depended, was fast dying down into an unmeaning routine of ceremonial, in which its own officials profoundly disbelieved. The Hellenic culture of the higher classes gave them the enchanted cup of speculation, not fresh and sparkling, though even thus dangerous, from the hands of Plato and Aristotle, but diluted and stale, and thus certain poison[2]. The only effect was to shake the power of the old sanctions of right and wrong, without supplying any others, adapted to take their place. "Il ne faut pas," writes M. Gaston Boissier, "non plus oublier de quelle manière et dans quel esprit les Romains lettrés étudaient la philosophie Grecque. Ils venaient écouter les plus

[1] See Niebuhr's letter to Savigny, quoted by Mr Maurice, *Edin. Lect.* p. 211.

[2] Mommsen, III. 427.

habiles maîtres, connaître les sectes les plus célèbres, mais ils les étudiaient plutôt en curieux, qu'ils ne s'y attachaient en adeptes. On ne les voit guère approfondir une système et s'y tenir, adopter un ensemble de croyance, et y conformer leur conduite. On étudiait le plus souvent la philosophie pour discuter; c'était seulement une matière à des conversations savantes, un exercise et un aliment pour les esprits curieux. Voilà pourquoi la secte Academique était alors mieux accueilli que les autres[1]." And yet the system of philosophy most akin to Roman ideas was undoubtedly Stoicism. This, under the patronage of the younger Scipio, and his circle, became what Mommsen calls the state-philosophy. But even of this, he says in his usual incisive style:—"Its practical results can hardly be estimated at much more than that, as we have said, two or three noble houses lived on poor fare to please the Stoa[2]." It is needless to add, that the bulk of the people, the *plebecula forensis*, remained entirely beyond the pale of its influence. Their conceptions of morality were at this time almost a blank; their ideas of religion chiefly supplied by the countless oriental superstitions which had already migrated from the bay-groves of the Orontes, to find a home by the banks of Tiber[3]. The evil grew worse and worse. The

[1] Quoted by Mr Grote, *Plato*, &c. III. 512 (*Étude sur Varron*, pp. 113, 114).

[2] Mommsen, III. 433.

[3] Ib. III. 436—438; IV. 560, 561.

Stoical state-philosophy degenerated into a hypocritical use of cant phrases and quibbling paradoxes, which aroused the hostility of the more earnest and wide-minded thinkers of the day. Narrow and bigoted obstructionists, like Cato and Brutus, might still fancy they found in it the moral food they needed, but the passionate enthusiasm of Lucretius fled from the Pharisaism of the Porch to a system which he felt at least took facts as they were, and fairly looked them in the face. "Every one who displayed intellectual vigour, opposed the Stoa or ignored it[1]." It seemed as if Stoicism was to be as signal a failure in the country of its adoption as in that in which it had first taken form and name. But a singular reaction set in. With all its imperfections, Stoicism was able to supply, better than any existing system, that which the Roman felt he needed. It restored the conception of an immutable law, holding together all the universe in obedience to its might, and making things what they were. "The Romans never could reverence anything which they believed had proceeded from them, and had been fashioned by them. The moment any Roman began to suspect that there was nothing but what he had projected from himself, that moment this reverence fell by its own weight[2]." The Stoic told him of an eternal order, whose laws he must discover and obey, however much the sim-

[1] Mommsen, IV. 560.

[2] Maurice, *Edinburgh Lectures*, p. 227.

plicity of this primary conception had been marred by subsequent additions. The Roman looked back longingly to the days of early temperance and gravity. The Stoic urged upon him a self-restraint yet sterner than that of his ancestors. So it came about that, while some, like Thrasea and Helvidius Priscus, kept to the old impracticable form of Stoicism, others, like Seneca and Epictetus, accepted its principles, but using greater freedom in handling them, based upon them the purest and noblest system of ethics that the unaided wisdom of man (if indeed any strivings after good may be called unaided) has ever been able to conceive.

But before we proceed to examine this more particularly, it will be advisable to say at least a few words on one, who though not the representative of any particular school, yet forms a prominent figure in the history of ancient ethics. M. Denis, in his *History of Moral Ideas and Theories in Antiquity*, devotes a long chapter to Cicero, and he does so with justice. For although the eloquent Roman added little or nothing to the science of ethics, his works are of great value to us as showing the popular moral ideas of the time. In speculative philosophy he was a follower of the New Academy[1]: but in ethics he found it impossible to attach himself to any school. He earnestly opposed the Epicurean

[1] For the reason of this see Maurice, *Ancient Philosophy*, p. 252.

system, but doubted much whether to consider the differences of the Stoical opinions from those of the Academics and Peripatetics of importance or not. Sometimes he appears to dwell upon points of discrepancy: and again he endeavours to resolve them into mere variations of expression. He held firmly to the points in which they agreed; the life according to nature, and the unconditional value of virtue. But where they separate from each other, he is in doubt which he ought to follow[1]. In his Tusculan disputations, the Stoical dogmas are adopted in their entirety: it is maintained that pain is not an evil, that the wise man is absolutely free from all mental disturbance, that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness. But in his books de Officiis he follows chiefly the treatise in which Panætius had taught a Stoicism adapted to men of the world, and with its speculative side kept in the shade[2]. We see at a glance how much the progress of thought has widened ethical conceptions since the days of Aristotle. The ideas of a universal law, transcending all special national law, of the community of nations and of moral obligation, have attained a development quite unknown to the great early moral philosophers of Greece: and although the Platonic division of the cardinal virtues is retained, a place is found for benevolence under the head of justice, and both are defined with clear-

[1] See this developed in Zeller, pp. 587—8.

[2] Mommsen, III. 432, and Zeller, III. 1. 576.

ness, and insisted upon with much force. But this benevolence is something far different from the Christian virtue of self-sacrifice. It is rather a wise liberality, too often alloyed by a political egotism, which seeks in the objects of its favours creatures and supports[1]. The subjection of the sensual passions to the rule of reason inculcated as a part of the conduct *becoming* to a man, is something very different from the Christian horror of impurity: and the defence which he allows himself to make for the youthful excesses of Cælius, is in singular contrast with the tone of the apostle in addressing the Corinthian Church[2]. The words in which Plato describes the charm of virtue, its power to win all hearts when once seen, and to influence them with love for itself, are borrowed[3], but they ring untrue to us in the pages of the Roman. They seem to have lost their magic in the lapse of years, and to have sunk into the commonplaces of the schools, powerless to help in the battle of life. There is a tone of uncertainty on primary principles, which might be expected from the sceptical academic in philosophy, and the accomplished trimmer in politics[4], but which goes far to destroy all confidence in the moral teacher. In the de Officiis, indeed, he maintains his right accord-

[1] Denis, II. 26.

[2] Cf. *pro Cælio*, passim.

[3] *De Off.* I. cc. 5 and 17.

[4] "L'insuffisance de la métaphysique de Cicéron reparait dans sa morale," &c. Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premières Siècles*, I. p. 230.

ing to the tenets of this school to defend what seems to him most probable[1]. But in the de Legibus, after building up arguments with apparent skill and success, he is obliged to entreat the New Academy to be silent, or the whole edifice will fall to the ground[2]. There is not less wavering in his theological sentiments. Sometimes he accepts the Stoical idea of the Deity as the all-pervading World-soul, sometimes he speaks of an intelligent and beneficent Person, who preserves and governs each several part. In one place he uses noble and exalted language as to the native immortality of the soul; in another he speaks of a future existence as reserved for the great and the good, and again it is reduced into an absorption into the Supreme, or refined away into an immortality of name and glory. We may perceive with satisfaction that some new duties have been recognized, some wider conceptions of a man's duty to his fellow-men gained by the action of Greek theories on the practical convictions of their conquerors, and by the intercourse of race with race under the imperial sway of the senate and people of Rome. But we cannot for a moment assent to M. Denis's assertion[3], that in the moral and religious ideas of Cicero we may discover the natural causes of the political, legal, and religious revolution which was about to change the face of the world. De

[1] III. 4. [2] I. c. 13. [3] *Op. cit.* II. 31.

Quincey has, half in jest we may suppose, accused Dr. Middleton of endeavouring, from his hatred of Christianity, to paint in the person of Cicero a Pagan in whom all the Christian virtues were found in their perfection, that the Gospel may be thus implicitly shown to have been needless[1]. How far Cicero fell below his own ideal is known to every impartial student of his life. Tergiversation, cowardice, vanity, not unfrequently deliberate duplicity and malignant envy, were grievous violations of his own canon of the *honestum*. But even his theoretical views on morals cannot be regarded as the highest product of Pagan thought. We find in none of his works the elevated conceptions of the relations of God with men, the deep earnestness of tone, the beautiful precepts of universal benevolence, which make the writings of Epictetus and Aurelius still so invigorating and helpful. Mommsen[2] may have gone too far in his sneers at "the ready adapter of second-rate Greek treatises," but we cannot but feel sometimes that Cicero is writing as one to whom ethics is but part of literature.

But the most fatal of all his deficiencies is one to which we have already passingly referred. We find no sure basis laid for the building whose proportions we are often compelled to admire. The universal law is indeed propounded and sanctioned

[1] *Collected Works*, Vol. VI. [2] IV. 610—613.

by God, and every man has within him a conscience which is normally capable of interpreting it, but ere long we become so depraved by corrupt customs and wrong opinions, that the light of Nature nowhere appears[1]. Hence it is needful that the law should be explained and enforced by the reason of the wise man. But, how the wise man is to be discovered, and whence he is to draw his authority, is nowhere stated[2]. Philosophers are the only guides, and philosophers themselves widely disagree. In reading the treatise of Cicero we cannot but feel the force of what Lactantius says of such teachers generally: "Their precepts have no weight because they are human, and need a greater authority, even a Divine one. No one therefore believes them, because he that hears them considers him that gives those precepts a man like himself[3]."

Among the later Roman philosophers an earnest attempt seems to have been made to meet this deficiency. M. Martha has noticed the singular character which they assumed, one corresponding almost to that of the spiritual director[4]. Religion had lost all hold on men. The one faith which had still any influence was a belief in the divinity of Rome as

[1] *Tusc. Disp.* III. 2.

[2] Leland, *Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*, II. 96—101.

[3] *Div. Inst.* III. c. 27. Cf. Leland, *op. cit.* I. 202.

[4] *Les Moralistes sous l'Empire Romain*, pp. 16—26.

typified in the Emperor[1]. But this was of little service in solving the problems of life, that were presented with such force to the Roman nobles under the early Cæsars. The same power which rigidly suppressed all political independence, left perfectly untrammelled (probably by deep design)[2] philosophical and ethical speculations. Shut off from the noblest careers of active life, the young patricians were not all satisfied with taking refuge in luxurious and sensual ease. To some in this enforced inaction, the problems of life, its meaning, its value and its destiny, the everlasting conflict between good and evil, the conscience and the will presented themselves with crushing weight. What Persius found in his master and friend Cornutus, that many a noble soul who stood proudly aloof from the wearying vanities and foul orgies of the imperial court, attempted to find in the professed philosophers of his time. Some of these doubtless were mere *aretalogi*[3], tickling their patrons' ears with high-flown common-place and rhetorical bombast. Others concealed under an ascetic exterior the foulest vices[4]. But not a few of the "domestic chaplains of heathendom[5]" seemed to have had lofty ideas of their calling, and an earnest

[1] Cf. p. 186, note 2.
[2] Merivale, VI. 412, 413 (new ed.).
[3] Suet. *Aug.* 74 (Casaubon).
[4] Juv. II. 65 et sacpius.
[5] Dr Lightfoot's *Philippians*, p. 308.

desire to discharge its duties aright. To this number belonged men like the Sextii and Musonius Rufus[1]. But perhaps the foremost of these in the days of Nero was Lucius Annaeus Seneca. The character of this illustrious moralist is not one which can awake any very profound admiration. The scathing irony with which Lord Macaulay speaks of him in his essay on Lord Bacon, is familiar to almost every one. "The business of a philosopher, according to Seneca, was to declaim in praise of poverty with two millions sterling out at usury, to meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury in gardens which moved the envy of sovereigns, to rant about liberty while fawning on the insolent and pampered freedmen of a tyrant, to celebrate the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen with which he had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son." "Seneca," says Niebuhr[2], with not less severity, "acted on the principle that as far as he himself was concerned, he could dispense with the laws of morality which he laid down for others, and that he might give way to his natural propensities." And yet he was no conscious hypocrite. We are sometimes tempted to fancy that he is simply stringing together fine common-places from the note-books of the rhetorical schools. But this feeling is dispelled when we come very soon upon passages in which he

[1] See a thesis by Charles Aubertin on this school, Paris, 1858.

[2] Quoted by Farrar, *Seekers after God*, p. 161.

paints with a depth of conviction, which cannot be feigned, the charms of virtue, the joys of a stern self-mastery, the calm of a peaceful soul. He speaks in bitter mockery or indignation of the popular preachers of the day, if we may venture the expression, who only thought of their well-turned periods, and the applause they could thereby win[1]. His object was to rouse the heart, to awaken the conscience, to awaken the love of virtue which is latent in all[2]. And yet this earnest and eloquent moralist was the cringing flatterer of Claudius, the apologist of the basest crimes of Nero. An analysis of his teaching, an attempt to discover where its weak point lay, may help us to explain the startling paradox.

The first thing that we notice about his doctrines is their eclectic character. It is evident that he wished to be considered a Stoic[3], and accordingly he has generally been classed as a philosopher of this school. But there are many points on which he widely differs from Zeno or Chrysippus. This may be due in great measure to the change which had been gradually produced in Stoicism, since the time of Panaetius. There was a tendency to limit philosophy to the study of ethics, to tone down the rigour of the founder's dogmas, to approximate to the teaching of the other schools[4]. But it is chiefly the result of the thoroughly practical manner in which Seneca re-

[1] Martha, p. 67.
[2] Ibid. p. 15.
[3] Zeller, p. 618.
[4] Ibid.

garded philosophy. With him it is the art of life, the rule of conduct. It is no mere intellectual amusement, but the means of deliverance from real and pressing evils. All speculation is worthless, which has not its immediate result in action[1]. Therefore he flings aside the paradoxes of the Porch, sometimes with ridicule, sometimes with indignation[2]. He cares not where he obtains a truth, provided it commends itself to his reason, and quotes as readily Plato and even Epicurus as the founders of his own school. The one thing which he feels he needs is such a conception of virtue as shall strengthen him to rise above all the temptations of ambition and sensuality, and preserve his soul in that perfect tranquillity in which he places the highest good. The earnestness with which he seeks this, an earnestness which in spite of literary foppery and practical inconsistency we cannot believe to have been merely assumed, the readiness to gather from all quarters that which seemed to him true and helpful, combined to free him from the faults of the various schools, and to give to his teaching a breadth and depth which up to this time had never been united. The beauty of many of his precepts, the acuteness of his remarks on life and duty, and the elevation of his conceptions of the relations between God and man, have made his writings the favourite study of Christian teachers from

[1] *Ep.* 89. 18.

[2] Martha, p. 53, and Zeller, p. 620.

the days of Lactantius and Jerome down to our own time. An elaborate attempt has been made[1] to show that the points of similarity in doctrine and expression between the Roman sage and the apostle of the Gentiles are so numerous and striking, that they can only be accounted for by the hypothesis of personal intercourse. But more sober critics have conclusively disproved a supposition which has hardly a shade of evidence in its favour. The points of resemblance have been greatly exaggerated, and some of the most remarkable instances of coincidence in thought and language are found in quotations from earlier writers. But perhaps the most conclusive answer to the theory is to be found in the self-satisfied tone of Seneca's writings. The mere fact that the courtly philosopher was living in his magnificent gardens outside the city of Rome, at the time that an obscure stranger from the most despised nation in the empire was a prisoner within its walls, does not afford the slightest presumption that they met[2], unless we find in the former a restless longing for more light and knowledge, that would have led him to seek it from any quarter. And this restlessness is utterly

[1] Fleury's *Saint Paul et Sénèque*, 2 vols. Paris, 1853. The elaborate reply to this by M. C. Aubertin, *Sénèque et S. Paul*, deserves all the praise which M. Martha has bestowed upon it. Fleury's position has also been combated by Baur in the *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* for 1858; and by Dr Lightfoot in an Appendix to his *Philippians*. Baur's article I have not been able to see.

[2] See Farrar, *Seekers after God*, chap. XIV. pp. 167—173 (principally from Aubertin).

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foreign to the eloquent preacher of the gospel of *αὐτάρκεια*.

So without further reference to a theory that may be regarded as now exploded, we may proceed to examine the real character of a system of teaching, for which such a parentage has been claimed. We notice in the first place that the ultimate basis of all ethical theories, the relation of man to God, is treated far more satisfactorily than in any system that has yet come under our notice. The doctrine already enunciated by Cleanthes, that "we are His offspring," is pushed to its legitimate development. "God has a fatherly mind towards good men, and loves them stoutly; and saith he, let them be harassed with toils, with pains, with losses, that they may gather true strength[1]." A Holy Spirit is residing within us, the guardian and observer of our good and evil deeds. Hence not only the actions, but the very thoughts and intentions must be pure, for no mind but a pure and holy one can comprehend God. The Stoic idea of the "solidarity of humanity" receives a fresh extension in this aspect of the deity. "He compares mankind to an arch, all of whose stones support each other. We are all the members of one body: men are all relations, since they have the same origin and the same destiny. Nature herself inspires us with a feeling of mutual affection, and makes us sociable.

[1] Dr Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 277.

Thus it is a greater evil to do than to receive an injury. It is a small merit not to injure men, when duty commands us to do them services[1]." In his indignant denunciation of gladiatorial sports, "man, *a sacred thing to man*, is now slaughtered for jest and sport," we seem to have an anticipation of Kant's canon: "Make no man a means to thy ends, but hold every man to be an end to himself[2]." The very slaves have claims to equality with the noblest, on the ground of their common manhood. Even enemies do not altogether forfeit their right to our kindness and beneficence. There is hardly one of the precepts given in the Sermon on the Mount, to which a parallel has not been found in the writings of Seneca[3].

We cannot wonder that some have been found to say, What lacks there yet? In what is the morality of the Gospel superior to that which was taught at Rome by those who had never come within sound of it? A careful examination will enable us to reply, Much in every way.

In the first place, the very course which in one way helped to raise Seneca to the height which he attained, in another way did serious harm to the purity of his morals. In abandoning the severity of the earlier

[1] Martha, p. 63.

[2] *Metaphysic of Ethics*, p. 293 (Semple's translation).

[3] This has been brought out most clearly by Dr Lightfoot in an Appendix to his edition of the *Philippians* on 'St Paul and Seneca,' pp. 281—283.

Stoics, he freed himself from much of the unpractical dogmatism which had weakened their influence. But it was at the expense of no little of their lofty adhesion to virtue and duty. As a natural result of his desire above all things to be practical, we find his doctrines and his life alike characterized by 'compromise'[1]. This is painfully conspicuous in all his relations with Nero, and especially in his conduct with reference to Britannicus and Agrippina. It was well that he should lay aside speculative quibbles, and turn his attention to the needs of daily life[2]. But we may fairly believe that somewhat more frequent contemplation of the majesty of abstract law and truth would have saved him from the temporising policy, which has cost his fame so dear. His morality consists in the inculcation of precepts much more than dogmas. But while "dogma is logical, rigorous, uncompromising, precept is by its very nature pliant and varied, and adapts itself to circumstances[3]".

Again, Seneca recognizes fully the powerlessness of mere knowledge of what is right. While his opponents urge that error is the cause of transgression, that precepts do not do away with this, or drive out false conceptions of good and evil; he retorts that it is not sufficient for principles to be laid down and admitted, unless the will is roused to obey them[4]." "You know that friendships ought to be sacredly observed and you

[1] Farrar, *op. cit.* p. 131. [2] Martha, p. 71. [3] Ibid. p. 12.
[4] *Epist.* XCIV.

do not do so." "If your precepts are doubtful," they rejoin, "you ought to add demonstrations of them. Then it is the demonstrations, and not the precepts, that are of service." "Nay but," he answers, "does not the authority of the teacher avail even without demonstration, just as the opinions of lawyers are accepted even without the reasons for them." True, if the authority be accepted as decisive. But what reason is there for admitting the *dicta* of individual philosophers, unless these are based upon accepted principles? Eloquent appeals, striking sayings, impassioned oratory may stir the heart for a time[1]. But the popular preaching of the age of Seneca was as barren of results as it is in our own day, whenever its object is not to possess the mind with grand conceptions which should be of force when the excitement of the moment has passed away[2]. We may do full justice to the enthusiasm for virtue which some of the philosophers of the day communicated to their hearers[3], and yet perceive how powerless their eloquent declamations were to turn the hearts of the many.

The theology of Seneca, though occasionally appearing so elevated, is liable to the charge of grave inconsistency. If at one time he approaches the Christian conception of a Father of all, in whom

[1] We have interesting accounts of the effects produced by the Sextii, Attalus and Fabianus in Seneca's own letters. See Martha, p. 67.

[2] Robertson's *Life and Letters*, pp. 164, 432, &c. (new ed.).

[3] *Ep.* 108.

all men are brethren, living with men, dwelling in them, the cause of goodness to all who possess it, at another he falls back into the Pantheism of his school, and speaks of a God who is not merely the Reason of the world, but the world itself[1], the totality of visible as well as of invisible things. The various constituent portions of the universe, such as the heavenly bodies, are inferior gods, members of the Universal Being. The theory that Seneca abandoned the Stoical idea of God as a merely corporeal existence and returned to the Platonic conception of an immaterial deity, is justly rejected by the latest and best authorities[2]. Hence the injunction to imitate God, resolves itself into the old Stoic formula of living in accordance with the laws of physical nature. "To follow the world and to follow God are equivalent phrases with Seneca[3]." The same inconsistency is to be perceived in his opinions on the immortality of the soul. At one time he speaks of this life as the prelude to a better one, of the body as an inn from which the soul returns to its home on high. He rejoices at the thought of a day which shall break the fetters of the body, the birthday of eternity. He paints the peace which awaits us above, the freedom and bliss of the heavenly life, the clear intuition into all the secrets of Nature there; he does not omit the recognition of friends

[1] Zeller, u. s. p. 626. [2] Ibid. p. 627 and note 3.
[3] Dr Lightfoot, u. s. p. 293.

after death; he regards the thought of that blessed future as the greatest support of the mind against grovelling, low and cruel thoughts[1]. In all this, harmonising so completely with Platonic and even with Christian views, Zeller finds nothing that contradicts the Stoical doctrine: although he admits that it is a development of that side of it, on which it approached most nearly to Platonism, with which Seneca had much more sympathy than the early leaders of his school. But even here, in his own words, he is trusting himself to the opinions of great men who *promise* a most delightful thing, rather than prove it[2]. And he seems far more consistent with the system he professes when he argues relentlessly in favour of the doctrine of annihilation[3]. "If there be any sense or feeling after death," is a phrase he constantly employs; again he says, "omnia post mortem finiri, etiam ipsam[4]." In any case the happiness of another life is reserved for elevated spirits. Heaven is closed against the lowly and the weak; and celestial glory only comes as a crown to that of earth[5]. His opinions upon the nature of the Deity and the future state may seem to have no immediate connexion with his ethical views. But when we see the feeble grasp with which he held

[1] All these statements are fully borne out by passages quoted by Zeller, 187, 188.

[2] *Ep.* CII. [3] Martha, p. 61.

[4] Frag. 28, ed. Haase. Compare Lightfoot, p. 321.

[5] Martha, *Les Moralistes*, &c. p. 62.

the truths that he himself deems of the greatest importance in influencing the will, we may understand the more readily the weakness of a system that seems at first sight in theory all but perfect.

But a closer examination will reveal defects even in the theoretical portion of his morality. The position claimed for him as the representative of the highest development of Pagan morality probably rests mainly on his universal philanthropy, and his precepts with regard to the treatment of enemies. Zeller writes: "The peculiar crown of his doctrine of morality lies in the common love for man, the pure human sympathy that is displayed to all without distinction, even to the meanest and the most despised; which even in the slave does not forget the man; in that mildness of disposition to which nothing is more opposed than anger and hatred, violence and cruelty, nothing appears more natural and worthy of man, than forgiving unselfish mercy, delighting in concealment, the beneficence that imitates the Divine goodness to good and bad alike; which mindful of human weakness has greater pleasure in forbearance than in punishment, does not shut out even an enemy from its good-will, will not recompense even wrong by wrong[1]." Yet there can be little doubt that before his time the universally accepted rule of conduct had been, "Thou shalt love thy friends and hate thine enemies." Mr Cope, after quoting the nobler precept substituted for

[1] Zeller, pp. 647, 648.

it in the Sermon on the Mount, says, "I can confidently affirm that nothing like this can be produced from any ancient moralist, down at least to the time of Seneca[1]." From his works passages have been cited as completely parallel to it; and in many cases the likeness is considerable. "Vincit malos pertinax bonitas:—opem ferre etiam inimicis:—amicis jucundus, inimicis mitis et facilis:—propositum optimi viri et ingentis animi tamdiu ferre ingratum donec feceris gratum:—at dulce est dolorem reddere. Minime, non enim ut in beneficiis honestum est merita meritis repensare, ita injuria injuriis: illic vinci turpe est; hic vincere[2]:" all these passages resemble somewhat the words of Our Lord; but in all "there is something wanting to the full measure of the Gospel precept[3]." And even if we found the precept perfectly stated, we should still be left without its reason: "if ye then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? *Therefore* all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them."

Here too we may notice inconsistencies, which

[1] *Prelection on Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 55. The passages quoted by R. Schneider, *Christliche Klänge*, u. s. w. pp. 327—329, seem to fall far short of it in force and range. Compare Tholuck on St Matthew v. 44.

[2] *De Benef.* VII. 31; *De Otio*, 28; *De Vita Beata*, *De Benef.* V. 1; *De Ira*, II. 32.

[3] Mr Cope, in the lecture above quoted.

show us how little such thoughts, though they come forth readily enough when the subject seems to call for them, really penetrated the mind of Seneca. In his 81st Epistle he is consoling Lucilius, who is lamenting the ingratitude of a friend: "Hoc certe, inquis, justitiae convenit, suum cuique reddere, beneficio gratiam, injuriae talionem aut certe malam gratiam. *Verum erit istud* cum alius injuriam fecerit, alius beneficium dederit." The theories of the *De Ira* seem to be quite forgotten when a less exalted doctrine will satisfy the requirements of the argument[1]. And the very passage in which Mr Cope finds the nearest approach to the sublimity of Christian ethics admits of another interpretation, certainly not less in harmony with the spirit of Seneca's teaching. "Non est quod irascaris; ignosce illis; omnes insaniunt[2]," may be the expression of the sentiment which inspired the words from the Cross, with which Fleury compares it. But it seems rather to breathe the profound contempt of an enlightened philosopher, who despised his enemies too much to hate them[3], who felt (to use the words of Seneca himself) that "ultionis contumeliosissimum genus est non esse visum dignum ex quo peteretur ultio[4]." The remarks that have been made about Aristotle are

[1] See Dr Lightfoot's Appendix, p. 281.

[2] *De Benef.* v. 17.

[3] Lightfoot, p. 295. Aubertin takes the same view of the passage.

[4] *De Ira*, II. 32.

equally true about Seneca. There is no recognition throughout his writings of the virtue of humility. There is indeed some approach to it in the consciousness of man's weakness, and little importance in the universe, in the submission without a murmur to the eternal laws of Nature, which are but the revelation of the nature and the will of God. We certainly cannot use of Seneca the language which Wuttke[1] employs (even in this case perhaps with unfair severity) about the rest of his school: "The Stoical patience is only the proud confidence of a man who has a firm reliance on himself as opposed to God and the world; it implies a consciousness of the unrighteousness of the order of the world, and hence a hatred against it." But towards his fellow-men, Seneca assumes a tone of pride and self-complacence, that is as far removed as possible from the Christian grace of humility. "Let each esteem other better than himself" is a precept which is not only not to be found in Seneca's writings, but one which he would have regarded as utterly unworthy of the dignity of a philosopher[2].

Again, in all his moral teaching there is a self-consciousness, a want of simplicity, that is very foreign to the Christian ideal of virtue. As Prof.

[1] *Christliche Ethik*, I. p. 264.

[2] Martha, pp, 64, 65; 80, 81. "It is characteristic," writes v. Hirscher, "that the heathen opponents of Christianity grounded their objections partly on the humility which it teaches and practises. So little does man without and outside of Christ comprehend the deepest and peculiar nature of all sanctification." *Christliche Moral*, I. 120.

Kingsley says of a character in one of his novels, he is always fingering over his spiritual muscles to see how they are growing. He has no enthusiasm, no passion that can carry him beyond himself. Even in his maxims of benevolence and forgiveness, he seems to be regarding rather his own moral development than the good of others. He is never without a *rücksicht* to his own position. The very same analysis of conscience which in one way brings him nearer to the fulness of Christian experience, in another produces a weak trifling and moral peddling which utterly ruins the charm of virtue[1]. It is not without justice that Sir A. Grant calls him in his moral nature a strange mixture of a pedant and a schoolboy. Dr Merivale has indeed reminded us that "the writings of Seneca show in their way a real anxiety to raise the moral tone of mankind, a spirit of reform, which though it never rose indeed to boiling heat, still simmered with genial warmth on the surface of society[2]." But compare even this favourable view of his teaching with the feeling that animated the breast of St Paul!

> What was their sweet desire and subtle yearning,
> Lovers and ladies whom their song enrols?
> Faint to the flame which in my breast is burning;
> Less than the love with which I ache for souls!

What above all things Seneca sought was quietude[3].

[1] Grant, I. 289.

[2] *History of the Romans*, &c. Vol. VI. p. 457 (new ed.).

[3] Maurice, *Philosophy of the First Six Centuries*, p. 10.

And hence arises that which is perhaps the greatest defect in his ethical system. The emotions are not only to be controlled by reason, but are as far as possible to be utterly eradicated. All excitement and anxiety are unbecoming; impassiveness is the supreme good for man, the object of the constant endeavours of the wise. The indignation at evil which must accompany any sensitive virtue, which has preserved "the chastity of its honour," is so far from being enjoined that it is positively condemned[1]. The more exalted view of Aristotle that anger is ofttimes needful, not as a commander but as a soldier, is branded as false: "if a wise man ought to feel anger at shameful deeds, and to be aroused and saddened at the sight of crimes, nothing exists more wretched than a wise man[2]." The man who while

[1] *De Ira*, I. 9.

[2] Ibid. II. 7. Contrast this with what is told us of two of the most perfect Christian characters that these later days have seen: "No direct instruction could leave on their minds a livelier image of his disgust at moral evil, than the black cloud of indignation which passed over his face when speaking of the crimes of Napoleon or of Caesar" (Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, I. p. 124; cf. p. 147). "The indignation with which he heard of a base act was so intense that it rendered him sleepless. His wrath was terrible, and did not evaporate in words. But it was Christ-like indignation: falsehood, hypocrisy, the sin of the strong against the weak, stirred him to the very depths of his being" (Robertson's *Life and Letters*, p. 159, new ed.). Compare the words of the latter in one of his letters: "I contended that it [the indignation expressed by our Lord against hypocrisy] was human, and that if a man did not feel something of the same spirit under similar circumstances, if his blood could not *boil with indignation*, nor the syllable of withering justice rise to his lips, he could not even conceive his spirit." Ibid. p. 212.

condemning can describe at length the grossest forms of impurity, as Seneca does occasionally, had surely no very sensitive shrinking from sins, "of which it is a shame even to speak[1]." Rather does he delight to sound their depths, to display them before us with a self-complacent satisfaction at the rhetoric which can so forcibly depict them. Bossuet may be too severe when he says, "this philosopher insulted the miseries of the human race by an arrogant mockery," but at least his haughty contempt for the weakness and vice of the multitude laid him open to the taunt[2].

We see then that as regards the substance of Seneca's ethics, humility, self-abnegation, sympathy, and moral indignation, virtues prominent in the Christian code are either not recognized at all, or mentioned only to be condemned: that the strongest supports of morality with him are uncertain and shifting; that the only means of impressing it on his disciples is the employment of striking expressions and laboured rhetoric, the only sanction is the authority of the individual teacher, appealing to the conscience of his cultured hearer. The power of this moral teaching and its relation to Christian ethics must be discussed hereafter.

When we turn from the writings of Seneca to

[1] Lightfoot, p. 310.

[2] Martha, pp. 81—83. For Seneca Bossuet seems to have felt an especial antipathy, often expressed in the strongest terms.

those of Epictetus, we cannot but feel that we are breathing a purer and healthier moral atmosphere. The eloquent rhetorician whose life so little corresponded to his precepts, affects us irresistibly with a sense of unreality. We feel, as M. Martha well says, that we must defend him before we can admire him. But the cripple slave of Epaphroditus, preaching in far less polished periods the same contempt for external goods, carried out in his life the doctrines that he taught. Many a beautiful story is on record, which shows us with what singleness of purpose Epictetus followed out the principles that Seneca only talked of[1]. Everything that we hear of his life only confirms the conception of his moral earnestness and simplicity that we gather from his writings. He did not care to write eloquent books in praise of virtue: all that we know of his teaching is preserved to us by the pious care of his follower Arrian, who drew up notes of his conversation, and a handbook of conduct from his recollections of what had fallen from his teacher's lips. But he felt the want of harmony in life, the state of slavery in which all, rich or poor, wise or ignorant, lay, and he set himself to discover a means of deliverance from it. When Seneca was seeking for quietude, Epictetus was in search of the secret of freedom[2]. But it was no theoretical solution of the problem that would satisfy him. His

[1] See Farrar, *Seekers after God*, p. 216.
[2] Maurice, *Philosophy of the First Six Centuries*, p. 10.

philosophy was strictly practical. He cared little or nothing for physics or dialectics. He "derived nothing from older authorities, if to derive means to receive as part of a traditional system[1]." But he found himself a slave, and he asked himself what it was that made him such. It was not the emperor, for he too was a slave like him; it was not fate, for he felt that he was not doomed to remain in slavery. There must be some deliverance for him. It was not God, for God would have made him otherwise had he been able. Then it must be his own will, and its subjection to things around. He fancied that he found in the Stoic doctrine of the indifference of external things, as taught him by his preceptor Musonius, that which would deliver his will from this slavery, and therefore he became a Stoic. M. Martha calls him "the most rigorous and the most consistent of Stoics[2]," and though this needs much qualification[3] as regards very many of his tenets, with reference to his contempt for all the external charms of life it is certainly true. Whatever things are not in our own power, he maintains ought to be absolutely indifferent to us, such as body, property, reputation, command, and in one word, whatever is not our own act[4]. These are mere appearances, not realities, and

[1] Maurice, *Philosophy of the First Six Centuries*, p. 12.

[2] Martha, *Les Moralistes*, &c. p. 156.

[3] Maurice, *The Conscience*, pp. 128, 129.

[4] *Manuale* ad init. This is singularly carried out in *Manual.* c. 18: "If a raven happens to croak unluckily, let not the appearance hurry

no attempt whatever is to be made towards securing them, for fear of losing the far more valuable things that depend on themselves alone. So long as there is anything outside of us that we covet or avoid, we are severed from happiness. But by limiting the sphere of action to a narrow space, he ensures the spirit perfect freedom within the self-imposed boundaries. Like a wise commander he draws back his forces into the central fortress of his position, and there he knows he is inexpugnable. One thing only is within our power, the will[1], or what comes to the same thing, the execution of our deliberate purposes (*προαιρέσεις*), and this alone can have real value for us. In it alone can we seek good and evil, happiness and misery[2]. Things which are in our own power we ought to bring to the best state possible: but use the rest according to their nature. And what is their nature? That depends upon the will of God[3]. "Should he wish you to act the part of a beggar, take care to act it naturally and nobly; and the same if it be the part of a lame man, or a ruler or a private man; for this is in your power, to act well the part assigned

you away with it, but immediately make this distinction to yourself; and say, 'None of these things is portended to *me*, but either to my paltry body or property or reputation or children or wife; but to *me* all portents are lucky if I will.'"

[1] Compare Kant, *Metaphysic of Ethics* (E. t.), ad init.: "There is nothing in the world that can be termed altogether and absolutely good, a good will alone excepted."

[2] Zeller, III. 671.

[3] *Dissert.* I. I. 17.

to you, but to choose that part is the function of another." His whole philosophy is summed up in the maxim Ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου, "bear and forbear;" bear whatever God assigns, abstain from that which he forbids[1]. There is the most intimate connexion between the ethics of Epictetus and his theology. He starts from the position that God is the Father of all, and discusses the consequences that necessarily flow from this doctrine[2]. From it man derives the consciousness of his own dignity (and here Epictetus far more nearly approaches the Christian conception than Seneca), his moral obligation, his independence of all without him, fraternal love to his fellow-men and the consciousness of the world[3]. Hence the simple tone of piety which contributes so much to the exquisite charm of his writings. He is ever conscious of the presence of God, and rejoices in it. "When ye have shut the doors, and have made all dark within, remember never to say that ye are alone. For ye are not: but God is within, and so is your angel; and what need of light have these to

[1] Zeller, III. 671. 4.

[2] *Diss.* I. cc. 3 (headed πῶς ἄν τις, ἀπὸ τοῦ τὸν θεὸν πατέρα εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐπὶ τὰ ἐξῆς ἐπέλθοι) 9, 13, &c.

[3] Zeller, III. 667, 668, *e. g.* "If Caesar had adopted thee, no one would endure thy pride, and when thou knowest that thou art the son of Zeus, wilt thou not be elated?" and again, "But how can we bear with such creatures [as bad slaves]? Slave! wilt thou not bear with thy brother, who has Zeus for his ancestor, who is born a son of the same seed, and of the same heavenly lineage?"

see what ye do[1]." "When thou goest to visit any great man, remember that another also above seeth what is done, and that thou oughtest to please Him rather than this one[2]." He ascribes all that is good in his teaching to the inspiration of the Deity. "When thou hast heard these words, O young man, go thy way, and say to thyself, It is not Epictetus who has told me these things, for whence did he come by them, but some kind God speaking through him? come then, let us obey God, lest God's wrath fall upon us[3]." He has a high sense of his mission on earth: "How is it possible, says one, if I have nothing, if I am naked, homeless, hearthless, foul, without a slave, without a country, to spend my life in happy calm (εὐρόως). Lo God, he replies, has sent me to show you in fact how it is possible. See, I have no country, no home, no wealth, no slaves, no bed, no wife, no children, nothing but the sky, and the earth, and one sorry cloak, and what is lacking to me[4]?" There is the most perfect submission to the will of God in the sure confidence that His will is always for good. "Dare to look up to God and say, 'Use me henceforth whereunto thou wilt: I consent unto Thee, I am Thine. I shrink from nothing that seemeth good to Thee; lead me where Thou wilt, clothe me with what garments Thou wilt: wouldest Thou that I should be in office or out of office,

[1] *Diss.* I. 14. 13.
[2] Ibid. I. c. 31.
[3] Ibid. III. 1. 36.
[4] Ibid. III. 22. 47.

should live at home or in exile, should be rich or poor? I will defend Thee for all these things before men[1].'" "Indeed my intention is to secure you from being restrained, compelled, hindered; to make you free, prosperous, happy, looking to God upon every occasion, great and small." He expresses in a singularly beautiful passage, too long for quotation here[2], his sense of the duty and the joy of singing the praises of this good and gracious God. There is in all this something far transcending anything that had as yet been known in the heathen world. We seem to see the exalted spirit of the Phrygian slave soaring far above the realms of the materialistic Pantheism of his school, and piercing by the energy of an inspired faith through the veil into the very presence of "Him who is not far from any one of us," and who, unknown to his earnest seeker, in the far Syrian town had become incarnate to redeem him.

This noble theology was the legitimate parent of a singularly pure and exalted morality. Epictetus gives his ideal philosopher the name of Cynic, but he has very little in common with the followers of Antisthenes, who outraged decency and trampled on humanity in the streets of Athens. His inclination to

[1] *Diss.* II. 11. 47. The complaint that Justin Martyr makes with truth about most philosophers, that "they speak of God as caring for the universe, for genera and species, not for individuals, not for you and me" [Maurice, *Phil. Six Cent.* p. 29], cannot be brought against Epictetus.

[2] *Diss.* I. 16. 15. It is transcribed by Dr Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 312; Mr Farrar, p. 196; and Sir A. Grant, I. 295.

the Cynics seems to have arisen chiefly from his sharing their opinion of the little value to be set upon scientific knowledge[1]; but the philosopher "does not step forward as the indignant preacher of morals, who rebukes the perversity of men in the cutting tone of the familiar Stoic saying about fools, but as the loving physician, who could heal their ill; but who complains of it less than sympathizes with it; who is not angry even at the greatest sin; but rather excuses it as involuntary error[2]." His special precepts of morality are all deduced from the one great fact of the brotherhood of men; and in one place at least he rises to the full height of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness of injuries, when he says that "the Cynic when beaten will not rush to the praetor for justice, but will love those who are beating him with the love of a father or a brother[3]." It is needless to trace this principle in its development with regard to slaves and strangers. In this too the doctrine and the life of Epictetus were in perfect consistency with the primary conviction on which they were based. Once again the question presses itself upon us; what was yet wanting to the perfection of this Pagan system of ethics? What did the Gospel give to men, that was not given them in the teaching of the Phrygian slave?

In the first place then the system of Epictetus

[1] Zeller, III. 672. [2] Ibid. III. 674; *Diss.* I. 18. 3.
[3] *Diss.* III. 22. 54. Cf. *Frag.* 70 b.

was based upon a dogma that the consciousness of men rejects. He insists with almost passionate earnestness, that nothing external to man's own will can be evil. Pain, misery, shame, and death itself may be *ἀποπροηγμένα*, but it is our duty to regard all these as absolutely indifferent to us, and whatever the theories of philosophers may assert, mankind will never accept a doctrine that gives the lie to the very constitution of human nature. Pain may be endured with patience, even with joy, by those who know that it is sent as a wholesome discipline, but no fine words will ever prove that in itself it is anything but an evil[1].

I have said that the morality of Epictetus was singularly pure. It is so, as compared with that of almost all other pagan moralists; but even here we find a failure to reach the Christian standard of purity. Precepts are given which are certainly inconsistent with it[2]: and the Christian condemnation of unlawful indulgences of the passions is merged in a wholesale denunciation of all their delights. The most natural and lawful emotions are pitilessly proscribed: it is forbidden to lament the loss of friends[3], wife or child. Compassion is to be stifled; the misery of another is

[1] See Lord Macaulay's *Essay on Bacon*, p. 395 (one volume ed.).

[2] Cf. *Man.* c. 33.

[3] In speaking of the death of a friend he uses the following comparison: "What if the pipkin in which your meat used to be cooked should happen to be broken? Must you die with hunger because you have not your old pipkin? Do you not send and buy a new one?" *Diss.* IV. 10.

to be nothing to us[1]. The distinction between the ἰδιώτης and the philosopher is made to consist in this: the former says; "Woe is me, because of my son, my father, my brother: the latter, if ever he is compelled to use such an exclamation, will use it only on his own account[2]." But when all emotion is thus ruthlessly proscribed, what motive is left for those actions of beneficence which Epictetus himself enjoins. The mere conviction that their obligation is a necessary deduction from the brotherhood of mankind will be powerless, if that which alone can prompt to continuous action he crushed[3]. There is something singularly impressive in the conception of one who is superior to all ordinary human emotions: but we have learnt from one of the greatest teachers of our day that

> Not for this
> Was common clay ta'en from the common earth
> Moulded by God, and tempered with the tears
> Of angels to the perfect shape of man;

but that

> Man
> Is then most God-like being most a man.

[1] Martha, p. 161. Cf. *Manuale*, c. 16, with the commentary of Simplicius upon it.

[2] *Diss.* III. 19.

[3] The modern conception comes out in striking contrast to the ἀπαθία of Epictetus in passages like the following: "The pressing problem for Romola just then was to keep alive that flame of unselfish emotion by which a life of sadness might still be a life of active love." Vol. II. p. 303.

Again, the belief in immortality and a life of happiness beyond the grave, which Seneca, as we have seen, delighted to picture to himself as the strongest ally of virtue, in Epictetus is again and again explicitly denied[1]. But how is it possible for a man to despise the attractions of sense and time, as Epictetus bids him, unless he endures as seeing the invisible. Then indeed they sink into nothing, compared with the glories on which the eye of faith is feeding. But without this vision of that which is beyond the veil, the burden which philosophy would lay upon men is too heavy for them and they refuse to bear it. I do not mean to assert that a life full of self-devotion and active beneficence may not be, or indeed has not been, lived by men who had no "sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection[2];" but only that such teaching as that of Epictetus cannot at least be expected to be generally received unless it be based on this foundation.

The piety of Epictetus is one of the most attractive traits in his character; and as we have already seen the way in which he deduces the duties of life from the relations of men to God, gives a power and consistency to his moral conceptions hitherto quite unknown.

[1] Cf. *Diss.* III. 24. 93. "Shall I no longer exist? No, you will exist, but as something else, of which the universe now has need." In *Diss.* III. 13. 14, he plainly asserts that the soul after death is resolved into its constituent elements.

[2] See Mr Mill's *Inaugural Address* at St Andrew's.

But in the first place his notions of the Deity are far from perfect. Sometimes he uses the singular form, sometimes the plural, sometimes even both in the same sentence[1]. And what is of yet more importance, his theories rested on no scientific basis. He might indeed express his faith in a personal Father of men with the authority of one whose life had been rendered harmonious and beautiful by the belief. But what if a disciple had asked him why he abandoned the Pantheism of his school? What if he had brought before him the doubts and fears, that have been expressed of late in words of ghastly force?—

So loth to suffer mute,
We peopling the void air,
Make gods to whom to impute
The ills we ought to bear;
With God and fate to rail at, suffering easily:
Yet grant, as sense long missed
Things that are now perceived,
And much may still exist,
Which is not yet believed:
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see;
All things the world which fill,
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still
With what we rail at, one:
One with the o'er-laboured Power that through the breadth and length

[1] Cf. *Diss.* I. 4. 37, and *Diss.* III. 13. 5, *πάντα θεῶν μεστὰ καὶ δαιμόνων.*

Of earth, and air, and sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Hath toil perpetually,
And struggles, pants, and moans;
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

How could Epictetus have met the confession of this faith "as vague, as all unsweet"? He could but have answered, My belief is so beautiful, that it must be true, my thoughts are thoughts

whose very sweetness proves
That they were born for immortality.

To some whose hearts were like his in earnest quest of that which would deliver them from their own slavery, the very fitness of the means would be sufficient demonstration. But there were those who would feel with the profoundly mournful line of the poet just quoted;

Nor does our being weary, prove that there is rest.

And to the multitude at large he could speak with no adequate authority. There might be a Father of men, a home on high; but He had never revealed Himself to His children, and called them home to Him. The Cynic indeed will claim to be "a messenger from Zeus to men to teach them of good and evil, to show them how they have wandered from the way, and how they are seeking the essence of good and evil

where it does not exist, and not noticing where it is." But where are his credentials? How are men to know that this call to the stern renunciation of all the joys of life is a message from Him that has given them?

Once more we come across the fatal distinction between the few and the many that was the curse of all ancient philosophy[1]. Epictetus gives throughout "counsels of perfection," to which he is aware that few even of his own disciples can ever attain[2]. As for the rest of mankind he will treat them well, he will not look down upon them with pride, but pity the ignorance which is identical with vice[3]. But he has no good news to preach to them. Emerson[4] may be right in saying,

> When Duty whispers low, "Thou must,"
> The youth replies, "I can."

[1] As Clement says, they were *ἰατροὶ ὀλίγων*, Christian teachers *ἰατροὶ πολλῶν*. Compare the passage near the beginning of Tertullian's treatise *De testimonio animae naturaliter Christianae:* "I summon thee not such as, when formed in the schools, trained in the libraries, nurtured in the academies and porches of Athens, thou utterest thy crude wisdom. I address thee as simple, and rude, and unpolished, and unlearned; such as they have thee who have nothing but thee; the very and entire thing that thou art in the cross-roads, in the public squares, in the shops of the artisan."

[2] *Diss.* III. c. 22 passim. The author of *Ecce Homo* has pointed out how inconsistent the whole tone of the essentially Stoic poet Juvenal towards foreigners was with his school's tenet of the brotherhood of mankind (p. 135). Yet some of his noblest lines are those in which he proclaims it (*Sat.* XV. 131—158).

[3] *Diss.* I. 18; II. 26. *Man.* 42.

[4] Quoted by Mr Farrar, p. 207.

But longer experience soon teaches him his own inability to fulfil the law, which he confesses he is bound to obey. "We want not so much means of knowing what we ought to do, as wills to do that which we may know[1]." There was not one of the contemporaries of Epictetus who could not have joined in the words of the Roman poet,

video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.

The curse which the satirist pronounced on tyrants seemed to have fallen on the age in which he uttered it:—

Virtutem videant, intabescantque relicta.

Many and many a heart in Rome could have used the words which the Apostle had written to some of their fellow-citizens:—"that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I would not, that I do: . . . . I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But Epictetus could only remind them in words that would have seemed the bitterest of mockeries, that the will was the one thing which was always and completely in a man's own power. His ears had never heard the jubilant antiphon, whose echoes have for eighteen centuries stilled the moanings of despair and roused the response of grateful joy, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

[1] Dr John Smith's *Select Discourses* (ed. 1821), p. 18.

But one thing above all else will prove the weakness of the system of Epictetus, that is, its failure. He did not hope to work a wide reformation; much if not all his teaching was directed to the formation of a class of enlightened and earnest thinkers, who might themselves be the guides of others: and in this he failed. "Show me," he cries "(that I may find what I have long sought) one who is truly noble and ingenuous; show me one either old or young[1]." And again, "Let any one of you show me the soul of a man who wishes to be of the same mind with God, and henceforth to find fault with neither God nor man, to feel no anger, no envy, no jealousy, in short who longs from man to become God, and in this mortal frame thinks of fellowship with Zeus. Show me him. Nay, you cannot[2]." Or once more, "By heaven, I long to see a Stoic. You say you have not one perfectly formed; but show me one even approaching the type. Grant me this favour, do not grudge an old man a sight, which to this day I have never beheld." In these sorrowful words, so touchingly descriptive of what he felt himself was the outcome of all his teaching, we seem to hear the final cry of despair of the pagan philosophy.

But if the philosophy of paganism was unable to work any great revolution among the masses, it was at least able to produce one more splendid example

[1] *Diss.* II. 16, 17. [2] Ibid. I. 19.

of elevated morality, who must not be passed over in silence, in Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. The fundamental doctrines of his moral system are identical with those of Epictetus, although they assume in the Emperor a milder and more tender form. "A blameless disciple in the severest school of philosophical morality, the austerity of Marcus rivalled that of the Christians in its contempt for the follies and diversions of life. Yet his native kindliness of disposition was not hardened and embittered by the severity or the pride of his philosophy[1]." It is not necessary for us to discuss his speculative opinions[2]; for to these he does not seem to have attached much importance. The one thing that he sought was the secret of self-government[3]. And this he found in a careful avoidance of all that would distract him from listening to the voice of reason, from the service of the *daemon* within him. This was to be gained by a resolute discipline of thought, a wise management of the impressions (*φαντάσιαι*) which the soul is constantly receiving from external objects, and a constant reflection on the duties incumbent on a man and a Roman[4]. He accepted most fully the Stoical doctrine that there is no evil in anything that is not in our own power. "Death and life, honour and dishonour, pain and plea-

[1] Milman, *History of Christianity*, II. 112 (new ed.).

[2] These have been clearly stated by Mr Long in an introduction to his translation of the *Thoughts* of the Emperor.

[3] Maurice, u. s. p. 32. [4] Book II. c. 5.

sure, all these things happen equally to good men and to bad, being things which make us neither better nor worse[1]." Generally, wickedness does no harm at all to the universe, and particularly the wickedness of one man does no harm at all to another[2]. This paradox, and a tendency which there undoubtedly is to Pantheism[3], show that Marcus Aurelius was not free from the failings of the philosophy of the Porch. Yet in other places we find a belief in the personality of the Deity and His care for His creatures. "Since it is possible that thou mayest depart from life this very moment, regulate every act and thought accordingly. But to go away from among men, if there are gods, is not a thing to be afraid of; for the gods will not involve thee in evil . . . But if indeed they do not exist, or if they have no concern about human affairs, what is it to me to live in a universe devoid of gods or devoid of Providence? But in truth they do exist, and they do care for human things, and they have put all the means in man's power to enable him not to

[1] Book II. c. 5.

[2] Book VIII. c. 55.

[3] "Unquestionably he was more inclined than Epictetus was to follow the old Stoics in identifying God with the world; the world typifying not the earth or the visible framework of things, but the order and constitution to which we belong." [Maurice, p. 35. Cf. Zeller, III. p. 680.] This gives an additional force to a singularly beautiful passage in the *Plea for the Christians* which Athenagoras the Athenian addressed "to the Emperors M. Aurelius Antoninus and L. Aurelius Commodus, conquerors of Armenia and Sarmatia, and more than all, philosophers:" c. xvi. *The Christians do not worship the Universe.*

fall into real evils[1]." His sense of the duty of the individual towards the race, though not based upon the personal relation of all men to God, but rather upon the fact that all are members of the same body, is even stronger than that of Epictetus. "That which is not good for the swarm, neither is it good for the bee[2]." Even the unworthy members of the human community he will not exclude from his love[3]. A recent writer on the philosophy of history attributes the regeneration of society to three main principles developed by Christianity, the doctrine of universal brotherhood that abolished slavery, the creation of charity, the enforcement of self-sacrifice[4]. It cannot be denied that all three ideas were familiar to the first fierce persecutor of the Christians. We are doing no service to truth if we attempt "to conceal or misrepresent or undervalue any one of those weighty and memorable sentences which are to be found in the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius[5]." The attempt to trace them to a Christian source has signally failed. And we must be willing to face the fact that one who had only heard of the Gospel as a *prava et immodica superstitio*[6] had yet gained a knowledge of those principles wherein its power is considered by a thoughtful

[1] Book II. c. 5.
[2] Book VI. 54.
[3] Zeller, III. p. 683.
[4] Lecky's *History of the Spirit of Rationalism*, II. 256 ff.
[5] Maurice, u. s. p. 37.
[6] Cf. Baur, *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche*, I. 426.

writer to have lain. Once more we are brought irresistibly to the same conclusion as that to which we came in the case of Epictetus. With Marcus Aurelius these conceptions were fruitful in a noble life; but they had no power to reproduce themselves. His precepts fell into a barren soil, and the harvest was scanty indeed. In the *leves hominum animi* that he despised[1] they worked the mightiest change that the world has ever seen. For with him they were without foundation, without creative energy, the last strain of a dying creed[2]. In the hearts of the Christians they were based on the bidding of the Saviour in whom they lived and moved and had their being[3]. "A few there may have been who have been able to dispense with all tender feelings and to live high lives by the law of duty alone. All honour to such hardy spirits! No word shall be said in their disparagement. However imperfect their principle may be, their face is set in the right direction. They are on the way,—who but must believe?—to all good. Yet their lives, upright though they may be, will be stern and unrejoicing, wanting in much that hearts set free should have. But for most men, and among these for many even of the nobler sort, such a life would be impossible. Under such an iron rule, a large and that the finer part of man's being would have no place. The soul's

[1] Ibid.

[2] Cf. Westcott in *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. *Philosophy*.

[3] ἐμοὶ τὸ ζῆν, Χριστός.

gentler but more animating forces would be starved for lack of nutriment[1]."

We cannot part from these later Stoics, without a feeling of reverence and even of affection. "That even in the times of the deepest moral degradation, the Stoical philosophy could create a Musonius, an Epictetus, a Marcus Aurelius, will crown it with imperishable fame. But it made no scientific progress in the hands of these. And if the hardness of Stoical ethics was softened by them, if the feeling of benevolence and of self-sacrificing love for men won with them a strength and depth which does not meet us in the older Stoicism, even this gain, great as it is in itself, cannot satisfy us for the want of a methodic and exhaustive philosophical investigation[2]." The noble ethical views of Epictetus and Aurelius were reached by a deviation from their own fundamental principles; and were often in direct opposition to them. A moral philosophy which should combine the sublimest teaching with the closest coherence with primary principles, and the most powerful motives to virtuous conduct, remained to be sought. The rest of the essay will be devoted to the question how far Christian ethics may be said to satisfy these conditions.

[1] Prof. Shairp's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 406.

[2] Zeller, III. p. 684.

Ὁ θαυμάσας βασιλεύσει καὶ ὁ βασιλεύσας ἀναπαυθήσεται.
Words traditionally ascribed to Our Lord.
(Clem. Alex. *Strom.* II. 9. 45.)

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS—THEIR METHOD.

Christian ethics based upon a creed—Scientifically developed from this —Its fundamental conception that of a kingdom of God on earth —Its synthetic character—Its comprehensiveness—The nature of its spring of action—The universality thence derived.

THE characteristic distinctions between Christian and pagan ethics fall under three heads:—distinctions in *method;* distinctions in *substance;* distinction in sanctions and their *power*[1]. The first class of differences will be discussed in the present, the remaining two in subsequent chapters.

[1] See von Hirscher, *Christliche Moral*, Vol. I. p. 31. (There is an interesting sketch of the author of this, the standard German work on Ethics from a Romanist stand-point, in Dr A. C. Coxe's introduction to his translation of v. Hirscher's little work on *The Sympathies of the Continent.*) I find from a note in Archbishop Trench's *Hulsean Lectures*, that the same division was made by Clement of Alexandria. Χωρίζεται ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ ἀλήθεια τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς, εἰ καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ μετείληφεν ὀνόματος, καὶ μεγέθει γνώσεως, καὶ ἀποδείξει κυριωτέρᾳ καὶ θείᾳ δυνάμει· θεοδίδακτοι γὰρ ἡμεῖς.

With regard then to *method*, the first fact that claims our notice is the inseparable connection between Christian ethics and Christian theology. "The method of Greece was to proceed from life to God; the method of Israel (so to speak)" and we may surely add, of Christendom, "was to proceed from God to life[1]." This is true in many ways. The Stoical philosophy, as has been already shown, was deficient in a sure foundation. It was based upon a "cosmological conception" (to use Prof. Masson's convenient phrase) for which they could assign no adequate reasons, and in which they were not themselves consistent. Hence it resembled the Hindoo solution of the problem of the world's position in space. The earth is supported on the back of a tortoise, but the tortoise itself stands upon nothing. As Mr Liddon has well said: "A general precept must be based on an energetic conviction, in order to give it the needful vividness and force. Now the great moral precepts of the Gospel, which are enforced by the Church of Christ, do rest upon such convictions. They do not hang in the air, like the sayings of heathen sages, while men make appropriate remarks on their profundity or their beauty, and drop a conventional sigh over their unattainable range. They grow out of and rest upon fundamental and vital acts of faith, truths into which, at each challenge to act,

[1] Westcott in *Dict. Bible*, art. *Philosophy*, II. 850*a*.

they strike their roots, truths from which in all genuine Christian souls they draw day by day and hour by hour their strength and their vitality[1]." Or as another writer has expressed it:—"There is not one Christian precept which has not its root, its motive-spring directly in some transcendental truth of God's nature and of the soul's relation to him. Deny these and the precepts fall[2]." In the Pagan world there came to be, if there was not originally, a complete divorce between morality and religion. In Christendom "religion is and ever has been the moral centre of gravity[3]." Christian morality finds its basis in the revealed relation of God to his human creatures. The ultimate reason why right is right is to be found in the being and nature of God[4]: the obligation for men to do that which is right is founded on the knowledge that the end of their being is the glory of God. Just as every previous system of ethics drew its principles from the view that its teachers held of the supreme good, the end-in-itself for man, so Christian morality establishes itself on the same conceptions. But in the teaching of Christ the supreme good is perfection[5];

[1] *The Honour of Humanity*, a sermon preached before the University of Oxford, p. 4 (2nd ed.).

[2] *North British Review* for Sept. 1867, p. 37.

[3] Coleridge, *The Friend*, II. p. 163 (ed. 1863).

[4] See Dr W. Lindsay Alexander in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, XV. 556.

[5] Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι, ὡς ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν. Ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν κ.τ.λ. ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ

the end-in-itself is a likeness to God, such as children have to their earthly fathers. It has been objected to Christian morality that it is unscientific; in reality "it is the most scientific of all ethical systems[1]"; for it is the only one which takes complete cognisance of the facts to which the consciousness of humanity bears witness. There are no two *ideas* more deeply rooted in the minds of men than the knowledge that there is an ideal excellence possible, and the feeling of miserable failure in every attempt to realise it. Christian morality is based upon and presupposes the existence of the Christian faith. And the Christian faith recognizes and interprets both these firmly fixed ideas. It pronounces a man right in supposing that there is an ideal set before him: it teaches him that the object of his existence was that he too might swell the chorus of praise that rises ever from all created beings[2], and in loving obedience mirror the perfections and exalt the glory of his Heavenly Father. "For this men were to work together as members of a whole, and by the fulfilment of this common vocation, the kingdom of God was to arise, as a community which in conscious freedom serves to glorify God in

ἐν οὐρανοῖς. See Robertson's *Sermons*, Vol. III. Serm. XII. *On the Christian Aim and Motive.*

[1] Maurice's *Epistles of St John*, p. 306; cf. Schwarz, *Evangelisch Christliche Sittenlehre*, I. p. 45.

[2] "If thou wouldest attain to thy highest, go look upon a flower; what that does willessly, that do thou willingly." Richter, quoted by Mr Baldwin Brown, *Divine Life in Man*, p. 142.

this material world as in the theatre of the kingdom of God[1]." But with not less clearness and plainness does it recognise the other greater fact, that this ideal has not been attained to; that sin has marred the beauty, and spoilt with jarring discords the tuneful harmony of the first conception: that the realisation of the rule of God is no more possible save under different conditions and by different methods and agents. The kingdom of heaven must be established anew: no longer to receive at once the willing homage of its lawful subjects, but to win its way in the face of the powers of darkness, to recover the allegiance of the wayward and the rebellious by slow degrees, and to gain a long-delayed but inevitable and triumphant victory at the last.

All the ideas of early innocence, of a fall, of human corruption, of regeneration, are as fundamental in Christian ethics as they are in Christian theology. But that which gives form and unity to the whole is the conception of the kingdom of God. It is with profound justice that one of the ablest modern works on Christian ethics[2] treats it as the doctrine of the realisation of the kingdom of God among mankind. For its canons are not the mere *placita* of the schools: they are the laws laid down by a king for the guidance

[1] Neander, *Theologische Ethik*, p. 16.

[2] See *Christliche Moral als Lehre von der Verwirklichung des Göttlichen Reiches in der Menschheit*, dargestellt von Dr J. B. von Hirscher, 3 vols. 8vo. [This work went through five editions in sixteen years.]

of his people. In the very term Christian ethics it is implied that the subject-matter is the conduct of Christians, that is, of those who are pledged to allegiance to Christ. So that from this relation arise the force of the laws and the character of their precepts. For Christian ethics is the science of Christian life, and the fundamental conception of the Christian life is given in the term regeneration[1], that is in the conscious or unconscious entrance into the Christian kingdom. The Founder of Christian ethics never gave isolated precepts, irrespective of the conditions under which those to whom he spoke were living. His commands were based upon the relation in which they stood to Him; and as those who had professed their loving trust in Him, their willingness to accept His teaching in all that concerned their duties to man and God, they were bound to accept His moral precepts. Hence there is a unity and harmony in Christian ethics, an intimate relation between the theoretical opinions of a follower of Christ, and his sense of the practical duties of life, which is wanting entirely in Pagan systems.

Closely connected with this aspect of the method of Christian ethics, indeed in reality the same view

[1] Cf. Harless, *Christliche Ethik*, p. 92. Indefinite terms are purposely employed: for Christian Ethics is not concerned with the much-debated theological questions as to the manner and time of regeneration, but is content to accept the fact as the needful basis of all its teaching.

taken from a slightly different stand-point, is that which makes its characteristic differentia lie in the fact that it is directed to an end already given[1]. All moral philosophy, and especially the moral philosophy of Paganism, has first to determine the end of the quest, then the means by which this end may be best secured; and each of these points has to be decided by pure reason. Christian morality is synthetic; Pagan morality, as soon as it put forward any claim to be philosophical, became at once analytic. At every stage of the analysis opponents might doubt the correctness of the process; it was hardly to be expected that any reasoner, however able and eloquent, should carry his hearers with him through the long train of arguments whereby he attempted to draw an induction from the manifold facts of human life; and then from this again to deduce the practical principles of action. And against those who asserted opposite conclusions he could only say, *Nempe hoc indocti,* or *At non dicet idem Chrysippus,* or whoever else might be the leader of the school to which he had devoted himself[2]. But the end at which Christian ethics is to aim is not a matter for analysis: it is given by a supreme authority; and if a Christian fails to make it his own he is guilty not of mere want of philosophical acuteness, but of treason against the laws to which he has vowed allegiance.

[1] Von Hirscher, *Christliche Moral,* I. 31.

[2] See *Ecce Homo,* Preface to the 5th edition, p. xiii.

But it is not only in the complete recognition of man's relations to the world and God, that the superiority of Christian ethics lies. The thoughtful student is struck at least as much with the comprehensive conception of human nature, on which its laws are founded. We have seen how the higher development of Pagan morality regarded the body as utterly beneath the notice of a philosopher, and its pleasures and pains as matters of entire indifference; while even mental emotions and passions were to be crushed beneath the imperious sway of impassive reason. But the Christian system proceeds on a far truer method. The body is not to be neglected or abused: still less to be pampered and indulged: in either case, the former as surely as the latter, it will have a terrible and inevitable revenge on the spirit that has disobeyed the laws of nature and of God. It is to be trained by temperance, cultured by exercise, and taught to yield a swift and ready obedience to the soul's behests[1]. So is it with the emotions and passions also; implanted by God in the heart of man, they were not set there that he might be vainly striving through all his days to root them out; but rather, as Plato long ago saw, that (changing the metaphor) their wild force might by the guidance of

[1] This idea is fully developed in two striking sermons by the Rev. J. Baldwin Brown, on "The Temple of the Body" and "The Redemption of the Body here." *Divine Life in Man*, pp. 197—234.

reason, and the control of an obedient will, be changed into disciplined and harmonious strength.

The Stoics had deemed it sufficient to culture the intellect, and form the habits; philosophers placed the controlling power in reason, and regarded passion as the antagonistic power which must be controlled and coerced by it. Christ also considers it necessary to control the passions; but he places them under the dominion, not of reason, but of a new and more powerful passion[1]. And in the light and warmth of this supreme emotion, all lesser ones that are in accordance with it have free play in a glad exuberance of joy, while the fouler passions flee from the heart, like the noxious brood of night before the dawning of the dayspring from on high.

It is in the nature of this paramount emotion that we find the crowning and supreme distinction between the ethics of Christendom and of Paganism. It is an enthusiastic devotion to a living person. It were as absurd to discuss the moral philosophy of Aristotle without any reference to the doctrine of an end-in-itself, or that of the Stoics without a word on the *αὐτάρκεια* of the will, as to speak of the method of Christian ethics and be silent on that which is the one root-notion underlying all. We have seen how a Lawgiver is given by the Christian creed on which Christian ethics rests. But this Lawgiver is no mere

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 145.

"causality superior to Nature necessarily presupposed in order to cogitate a synthesis *a priori* between virtue and happiness[1]," as in Kant's system, but One who is bound by the closest and dearest ties to those to whom He gives the laws which alone can make them happy;—

> Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,
> Coldly sublime, intolerably just;

but the God who so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that the world through Him might be saved. And the parable of the vine and the branches supplies the very first lesson in Christian ethics.

> Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning;
> Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no man cometh to the Father, no man attains the end to which Christian ethics and Christian dogmatics alike endeavour to bring him, save by Him. He is the Lawgiver of the new moral code, and it draws its force, not from eloquent oratory, or irrefutable reasonings, but from the authority of Him who uttered it[2]. Even Baur, who resolves the Gospel into a return of humanity into its ethico-religious consciousness, is compelled to admit that its whole historical import

[1] *Metaphysic of Ethics*, Semple's Introduction, p. cxii.

[2] Καὶ ἐξεπλήσσοντο ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ· ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων. St Mark i. 22.

depends upon the person of its founder[1]. Christian ethics is not a collection of single moral precepts, which Christ uttered, but it is founded on the belief in the revelation of God by the World-Redeemer.... Christ Himself is the principle of Christian morality[2]. He is the king whose subjects win from passionate loyalty and love the strength to follow his commandments. He is Himself the perfect example, and the attainment of likeness to Him is the end of all strivings after virtue, and is itself the rich reward of all self-denial and sacrifice. His words are ever "per me venitur, ad me pervenitur, in me permanetur." And this is the one thing which gives to the ethical system which He taught its all-embracing character. The dull and the unlearned cannot rise to the conception of an order pervading all nature. They cannot abstract from the bewildering chaos of phenomena that they see around them, the notion of a universal law that rolls the stars in their courses through the heavens, and binds their own lives down in the iron groove of fate. But "the savage who can do little else can wonder, worship, and enthusiastically obey[3]." And in this consists the foundation of Christian ethics. Much may yet have to be added: in order to the highest virtue there is needed besides, not only

[1] *Geschichte* &c. I. p. 35; cf. Pressensé, *Jésus-Christ*, p. 330, and *Ecce Homo*, p. 76.

[2] Schwarz, *Evangelisch Christliche Ethik*, p. 46.

[3] *Ecce Homo*, p. 66.

the cultivated habits that make deeds of goodness natural, but some intellectual enlightenment to know the right in cases where the path is not plain before one. But at least the fundamental virtue in the Christian code is as easy and perhaps more easy to the unlettered hind as to the noble and the sage. It was much that Christianity based morality no longer on the shifting sands of speculation, but on the revealed condition and destiny of man, and spoke with authority on his end of life. It was much that it embraced the whole nature of man within the compass of its moral laws, and taught him to present his whole being, body, soul and spirit, a living sacrifice, which was but his reasonable service. But it was more, far more than all the rest, that it made the mainspring of all right action to consist in an enthusiasm that all might feel, that the laws of its kingdom might be known and obeyed by the meanest and humblest of its subjects.

Ὡς πάντα ἡμῖν τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν δεδωρημένης. S. Pet. Ep. Sec. i. 3.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS—THEIR PERFECTION.

Perfection of Christian ethics testified by every age—Mr Mill's opinions quoted and criticised—Christian morality self-sufficient—not merely negative—not selfish—includes the duty of patriotism—and magnanimity—The nature of the obedience required—Mr Newman's objections discussed—Duties as to property—The rights of nations—families—woman—Slavery—Culture—The Christian Church and universal philanthropy.

It might seem at first sight as if the discussion to which this chapter is to be devoted were superfluous. For eighteen centuries Christian morality has been recognized as embracing within its requirements all that the mind of man could conceive as virtuous. "All that anywhere has been recognized and has approved itself as good, as noble, as virtuous, has been taken up into Christianity... All that is excellent which the ancient teachers of morals prescribed,

all rational thought and action, all righteousness, uprightness, benevolence, beneficence, love of enemies, nobleness of mind, high destiny of man, perfection, strife after a highest good, virtue, purity of heart, noble utterances of the soul, self-control, self-abnegation, likeness to God, spiritual exaltation to the knowledge of God and oneself, all that had already been taught before and outside of Christianity to the honour of man and the praise of God, at least cannot and may not be wanting in Christian ethics. Far rather is it here for the first time rightly understood. For had there been nothing higher whereby all this was better understood, and lifted into a light all its own, there had been no distinctively Christian doctrine of ethics, and this special denotation had been only an immoral and unrighteous assumption of Christians[1]."

For the pride and self-complacence of by far the majority of pagan philosophers it has rendered imperative the winning grace of a manly humility. For the lax ideas of sexual morality which were universal in all the ethical schools of antiquity[2], it has substituted a perfect and sensitive purity, not only

[1] Schwarz, *Evangelisch Christliche Sittenlehre*, pp. 146, 147.

[2] Instances of this, if needful or expedient, could be multiplied almost infinitely; but it will be sufficient to refer to Leland's *Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*, II. 112—123 (ed. 1819); Lightfoot's *Philippians*, p. 307; Zeller, III. 1. 261—263, and the authorities quoted there.

in act, but in word and thought. For the hatred of foreigners on which Plato congratulates his fellow-citizens[1], for the readiness to return good for good, and evil for evil, which Isocrates teaches as a virtue[2], Pindar boasts of, and Aristotle desires to possess, for the cold benevolence of the Stoic schools, it substitutes an ardent enthusiasm of universal love and beneficence. To its kindly influence we owe the abolition of slavery, the institution of hospitals, the sense of our duty to the poor around us, and in short the acknowledgment that each is his brother's keeper. And if too often the cry of the wronged and the suffering rings in vain in the ears of those who are deaf to its appeal, such neglect is regarded no longer as a mark of devotion to higher things than bodily cares and pains[3], but as treason to the paramount law of life, as a violation of the duty in which all other duties merge[4].

Even those who have freed themselves from what they deemed the fetters of an effete faith have been compelled to bow before the perfect beauty of the moral teaching of our Lord and King:—"L'évangile seul est quant à la morale, toujours sûr, toujours vrai,

[1] Menexenus, p. 245. Unless indeed we may venture to exonerate Plato from a charge, that as far as I know is based on this one passage, by placing this among the spurious dialogues.

[2] *Ad Demon.* § 26, with Mr Sandys' note.

[3] Cf. Plato, *Theaet.* p. 174 B.

[4] *Ecce Homo*, Preface to ed. 5, p. xvi.

toujours unique, et toujours semblable à lui-même[1]." It might have seemed that now at least the task was no longer required of defending its completeness and perfection; that the clashing and discordant tumult of polemics might here be exchanged for the reverent calm of grateful worship. But recently more than one attempt has been made to impugn the character of the Gospel ethics, or at least to maintain that this body of doctrine by itself is inadequate to the wants of man. This latter view has been put forth by one of the most illustrious thinkers of the day; and although the passage in which he states his opinions and the reasons for them is somewhat long, it will be better to transcribe it with a few unimportant omissions than to run any risk of misstatement or misinterpretation. Mr J. S. Mill, in his *Essay on Liberty*, writes as follows:—"It may be objected [to this position that 'only through diversity of opinion is there in the existing state of human intellect a chance of fair play to all sides of the truth']—but *some* received principles, especially on the highest and most vital subjects, are more than half-truths. The Christian morality for instance is the whole truth on that subject; and if any one teaches a morality which varies from it, he is wholly in error. . . But before pronouncing what Christian morality is or is not, it would be

[1] Rousseau, quoted by Reinhard, *Christliche Moral*, I. p. 32 (3rd ed.).

desirable to decide what is meant by Christian morality. If it means the morality of the New Testament, I wonder that any one who derives his knowledge of this from the book itself can suppose that it was announced or intended as a complete doctrine of morals. .... To extract from it a body of ethical doctrine has never been possible without eking it out from the Old Testament, that is, from a system elaborate indeed, but in many respects barbarous and intended only for a barbarous people. St Paul, a declared enemy to this Judaical mode of interpreting the doctrine and filling up the scheme of his Master, equally assumes a preexisting morality, viz. that of the Greeks and Romans; and his advice to Christians is in a great measure a system of accommodation to that, even to the extent of giving an apparent sanction to slavery. .... Christian morality (so called) has all the characteristics of a reaction. It is in great part a protest against Paganism. Its ideal is negative rather than positive, passive rather than active, innocence rather than nobleness, abstinence from evil rather than energetic pursuit of good. In its precepts, as has been well said, 'thou shalt not' predominates unduly over 'thou shalt.' In its horror of sensuality it made an idol of asceticism, which has been gradually compromised away into one of legality. It holds out the hope of heaven and the threat of hell as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life; in this falling far below the best of the ancients, and doing

what lies in it to give to human morality an essentially selfish character by disconnecting each man's feelings of duty from the interests of his fellow-creatures, except so far as a self-interested inducement is offered to him for consulting them .... And while in the morality of the best Pagan nations duty to the State holds even a disproportionate place, infringing on the just liberty of the individual, in purely Christian ethics that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged..... What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian: as even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour, is derived from the purely human not the religious part of our education, and could never have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth professedly recognized is that of obedience[1]." Mr Mill usually displays a singular power of appreciating theories and arguments from which he totally disagrees; and this makes it the more surprising that on a subject of such serious importance, he should have written a passage, every sentence of which shows the gravest misconceptions. It may seem to argue no little audacity and want of respect for the most eminent living reasoner to use such language, but the interests of truth appear

[1] *Essay on Liberty*, pp. 87—91 (1st ed.).

to allow of none less decided. But perhaps it will be well, before entering upon the criticism of Mr Mill's opinions, to say a few words about an historical fact which may have induced him to take them up. This ought perhaps to have been dwelt upon before, but the drift of the discussion seemed to carry us away from it to another aspect of the question—I mean the *propaideutic* character of the Pagan philosophy. The fathers of the Alexandrian church, and above all Clement[1], delighted to view in the teaching of the heathen sages a preparation for the fuller light and purer truth of the Gospel; and we should be denying the guiding hand of God in history if we refused to acknowledge the debt which mankind owes to those who did so much in preparing the field of the world for the good seed that was to be sown in it. It was a great thing that in a time when religion had lost all hold on the hearts of man, philosophy should have stepped in to keep alive the idea of unselfish virtue; to produce some few examples at any rate of pure and elevated morality, and perhaps the most essential service of all, to form a language which might be adapted to the expression of Christian sentiments and consecrated to the use of the Church of Christ[2]. "Philosophy failed as a religious teacher practically, but it bore noble witness to an inward law. It laid

[1] Cognat, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, pp. 135—159.
[2] Trench's *Hulsean Lectures*, pp. 293—298.

open instinctive wants which it could not satisfy; it cleared away error when it could not find truth; it swayed the foremost minds in a nation when it left the mass without hope. In its purest and grandest forms it was 'a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ' (Clem. Al. *Strom.* I. sec. 28)[1]." We are bound to give full recognition to all this: we are bound in the lofty aspirations of Plato, or the dignified sweetness of Aurelius, to find a divine inspiration and guidance; —*πάντων· μὲν γὰρ αἴτιος τῶν καλῶν ὁ θεός*[2]. And yet allowing the fullest weight to this it comes far short of what is asserted by Mr Mill. It is something very different to assert that the Greek and Roman ethical philosophy acted as a highly valuable, perhaps indispensable, forerunner to the Gospel teaching, to render men willing and able to accept it in all its purity, and to maintain that it was necessary to supply the deficiencies in that teaching.

Mr Mill says that "it has never been possible to extract from the Gospel a body of ethical doctrine without eking it out from the Old Testament." The German writers on Christian ethics appear with hardly an exception to have performed this impossibility. Rothe in the work on which the fame of that great and good man is imperishably based, the *Theologische Ethik*, has hardly a quotation from the Old Testament throughout, except for the sake of confirmation

[1] Westcott, *Dict. of Bible*, II. 852 a. [2] Clem. *Strom.* I. § 5.

of the deductions he has drawn from the peculiarly Christian principles[1]. The same may be said of Von Hirscher and Harless. Their ethical doctrines are developed from conceptions which they derive entirely from the New Testament; though of course not without constant regard to the facts about man's original condition and fall, which have indeed the authority of the New Testament, but are found originally in the Scriptures of the Old Covenant. Von Hirscher for instance bases his ethical system on the one principle of love based on faith and working in the kingdom of God on earth; and the fundamental position of Wuttke is almost precisely identical. It is true that St Paul recognizes a preexisting morality; but so far is his advice from being a system of accommodation to it that he sets up an entirely new standard, which he warns his converts will frequently differ from that to which they had been accustomed[2]. How far he sanctions slavery will be discussed hereafter. He gives his directions, not as being in accordance with any old ethical notions that his disciples might have had, or otherwise; but simply and directly as the commands of God which were to be implicitly obeyed, however much at variance with the ideas of the heathen world. Baur and Zeller, Hilgenfeld and Schwegler, would probably have been as much sur-

[1] Cf. *e. g.* his treatment of lying in Vol. III. pp. 547—575, with the long list of references in *Anm.* 3.

[2] Rom. xii. 2; Ephes. v. 3, 4, &c. &c.

prised as the most orthodox divine to learn that St Paul's antipathy to the law was so great that he preferred to supplement the deficiencies in his Master's ethical teaching from Plato or Cleanthes rather than from Moses. "La fusion harmonique de l'élément moral et de l'élément religieux, c'est là, selon nous, le trait distinctif de sa théologie[1]."

Mr Mill is still more unfortunate in the next few sentences which I have quoted from him. The justice of his remarks may best be seen by placing them side by side with the authorities from which he may be supposed to have derived them. "Its ideal is negative rather than positive [be not weary in well-doing], passive rather than active [fruitful in every good work], innocence rather than nobleness [whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye], abstinence from evil rather than energetic pursuit of good [blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness]." Mr Mill's description of the perfect Christian would precisely suit one character in the Gospel story, the young man who went away very sorrowful, for he was very rich: but he has not been usually accepted by the Church as the model on which to form her children. And when we remember that the ideal of Christian ethics is given not in any words, but in a Life, that of all lives ever lived on earth was most full of positive

[1] Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles de l'Église Chrétienne*, II. p. 129.

virtue, of active beneficence, of noble constancy and of unwearied pursuit of good, Mr Mill's words startle us strangely. It only remains to be added that the most perfect of the Pagan systems of morality, from which Christian ethics according to him draws its positive element, we have seen already, was almost purely "a morality of abstention, in which 'thou shalt not' predominated unduly over 'thou shalt';" and its leading maxim *ἀνέχου* and *ἀπέχου*.

Another article of indictment against Christian ethics is that they hold out heaven and hell as the appropriate motives to a virtuous life. It would have been hard to conceive how any one could have imagined for a moment that this was a fair representation of the Christian mainspring of action, had we not found it authoritatively taught as such by a Christian divine[1]. Christianity does indeed teach that in another world as in this virtue inevitably leads to the highest happiness, vice as inevitably to misery; that through all the ages oneness of will with the will of the Father is blessedness, opposition of will the one unending woe. But even the best of the ancients, of

[1] Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, Book I. c. 7. "Virtue is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness." Butler gives far higher teaching. It may seem at first sight as if he made his "moral dynamic" consist too much in the coincidence of duty and interest, to a certain extent realized in the present life, and made ultimately sure by the very notion of a perfectly wise and good Ruler. But in his *Sermons on the Love of God* he points us with an intensity of feeling that glows through his usually frigid style to a nobler, purer, and stronger motive.

whom according to Mr Mill in this Christianity falls far short, held no other doctrine. Plato too taught that the penalties of vice could not be escaped by any clever shifts; for to act wrongly is to be removed from the Divine pattern, and to be brought nearer to the likeness of evil; that

> "the soul grows clotted by contagion,
> Embodies and embrutes till she quite lose
> The divine property of her first being[1]."

The faith of the philosopher is only reechoed, though with tenfold meaning, in the words of the apostle, "to be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." What other teaching than that of the Gospel could be given by the most ardent disciple of the utilitarian creed, who believed in a future life at all, it is hard to see. To find in a purely selfish fear of the future, the motive to a Christian life, and to overlook the constraining might of spotless goodness and infinite love, that beamed on thousands in the Holy Land, and revealed itself to millions more as they listened to the tones of those to whom it was the breath of life itself, or as they knelt in childhood at a mother's knee, this is to show a blindness at which we can only marvel. Not in order to escape the torments of hell, but because while we were enemies God so loved us, we are urged to love our bre-

[1] Milton, *Comus*, v. 460 ff.; cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 176 E; *Phaedo*, 81 C; *Gorg.* 524 E, &c.

thren. Not, as Mr Mill elsewhere strongly puts it[1], "because God is stronger than we are, and will damn us if we don't," but because it is only thus that we can satisfy the yearning of a Father's wonderful love, we are bound to give ourselves up utterly a living sacrifice to Him.

It is not more easy to understand how "each man's feelings of duty are disconnected from the interests of his fellow-creatures, except so far as a self-interested inducement is offered to him for consulting them," by exciting within him the "enthusiasm of Humanity."

In the rest of his remarks Mr Mill seems to have mistaken the undeveloped for the non-existent. Duty to the State is scarcely touched upon in purely Christian ethics except to inculcate passive obedience; because that was the only virtue possible to those to whom Christ was speaking or the Apostles writing. But principles were laid down which, without any addition from Greek or Roman sources would have developed the purest patriotism. It is a miserably false deduction from the teaching of the gospel that the life of a nation is a secular thing. "We cannot attain Christ's likeness if we do not learn to care for England as He cared for Palestine, when it was in its lowest condition[2]." If ever there lived a man who

[1] *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. II.

[2] Maurice, *Hope for Mankind*, p. 49. See too *Ecce Homo*, p. 56.

had "the idea of obligation to the public" it was St Paul. His "great heaviness and continual sorrow at heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh," his willingness to be even accursed from Christ on their behalf, are signs of as passionate a patriotism as any that the annals of Greece and Rome can show. The earnest attempt to deliver his countrymen from all such social abuses as destroy natural affection, from unjust privileges and conditions of society, which make the prosperity of one incompatible with the prosperity of another, from ignorance and the *μεριμναὶ βιωτικαί*, which make life mean and narrow, is a duty rendered imperative on the Christian by the great law of edification[1].

In the same way by principles and not by precepts "magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honour" *are* derived from the religious part of our education. For what is the conception that the early Christian teachers have of the position of man in Christ? They use language which the consciousness of heathendom in all times, and never more than in their own times[2] bears out, about the utter powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, of man as he is in himself. But when they come to speak of men redeemed and adopted in Christ, no language is too

[1] *Ecce Homo*, pp. 211—226.

[2] Cf. Herod. v. 4; Pind. *Pyth.* viii. 131; Thuc. iii. 45; Eurip. *Frag. ap Clem. Strom.* iii. 3; and especially Lucret. iii. 1016 ff. and 1066—1097; and Plin. *H. N.* ii. 5, "nec miserius quidquam homine nec superbius" [from Trench].

strong to express their dignity and glory. Sons of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ, for whose manifestation the whole created universe is earnestly waiting; they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: they are kings and priests unto God their Father; they have been begotten again unto a living hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. All things are theirs; whether the world or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are theirs; like the brothers of Gideon whom Zeba and Zalmanna slew, each one resembles the children of a King. Nor are those who are as yet rebellious and impenitent unmarked from on high; and when they turn from the evil to choose the good, they fill the heavenly courts with joy. This high prerogative is not to be lightly abandoned[1], and to those who understood it aright, what keener incentive could there be to high-mindedness, personal dignity and the nicest sense of honour? St Paul will never suffer his disciples to forget that this glorious present, with its far more exceedingly glorious future, is not secured by merit; it is the free gift of the love of God, and so calls on the one hand for grateful humility and lowliness of mind; but on the other it as imperatively demands a sense of the high vocation of those whose citizenship

[1] Coloss. ii. 18, and Alford *in loc.* See also Bp. Ellicott's note and reff.

is in the heavens[1]. And if any further proof from history is needed of the position I am now defending, it is surely supplied in abundance by the Puritans. Whatever their faults may have been, they will not be denied the possession of 'magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity and the sense of honour' in a very high measure. Yet apostles and not philosophers supplied the daily spiritual food on which that noble race was reared.

Finally Mr Mill, in asserting that "the only worth professedly recognized is that of obedience," loses sight entirely of the nature of that obedience. It is not slavish adhesion to the letter of a written law, in constant terror of the slightest departure from the words of the commandment. It is that perfect harmony of the will of the individual with a higher will, recognized as supremely good, which constitutes the truest freedom for man[2]. The Christian is not only a *child* of God, but a *son*, able and intended to enter into his Father's counsels about the world and its destiny. He knows that his Father hates injustice and wrong intensely, and longs for the establishment of the rule of righteousness. Therefore, in the way in which it is given him, as poet, artist, philosopher or statesman, he sets himself with all his heart to bring about that kingdom. But in all his endeavours to

[1] See Neander's *Planting and Direction of the Christian Church* (Bohn), I. p. 483.

[2] *Ecce Homo*, Chap. XIII. "The Christian a Law to himself."

realize it, he is a law to himself, because the reigning passion in his heart has utterly destroyed those evil desires and lusts that positive law could only have checked imperfectly. He can say

> In a service which Thy will appoints
> There are no bonds for me;
> For my inmost heart is taught the truth
> That makes Thy children free,
> And a life of self-renouncing love
> Is a life of liberty.

Mr Mill asserts that Christian ethics needs to be supplemented from other sources. Mr F. W. Newman has gone much further and asserts that they need to be corrected. The views that were put forth in the *Phases of Faith*[1], have recently been stated again yet more clearly in a pamphlet on *The Defective Morality of the New Testament.* It will be worth while briefly to consider the force of his remarks. For throughout this essay, the phrase "Christian ethics" has been taken to mean the morality taught by Christ and His apostles. And if it be shown that this too is defective or erroneous, the imperfection that has been pointed out in the ethics of the Pagan philosophies will be not a characteristic distinction, but rather a point of resemblance. Mr Newman boldly asserts that "the defects are not partial, but total; they pervade the entire moral system, and are the greater in each part, the greater its im-

[1] pp. 102—113 (5th ed.).

portance .... The defectiveness .... is sometimes that of total omission, sometimes that of precepts contrary to right and truth: in fact the latter is the commoner case." Let us see then how these assertions are supported. Mr Newman finds that the precepts given by Christ with regard to *property* are at variance with those of St Paul. In the one case the most liberal open-handedness, irrespective of the merits of the applicants, is enjoined, and any accumulation of property forbidden; in the other "the precepts given" are "in full agreement with Greek and Roman sages." Mr Newman notices only to reject the manifest explanation that the words of our Saviour were addressed to a few specially-commissioned disciples, under circumstances which made obedience practicable and advantageous; the directions of St Paul were given to settled communities, where such a course of conduct would be neither possible nor expedient. We are told next that the New Testament gives us no clear theory concerning the moral position of him who holds power, or concerning the rights of nations; that the conditions of lawful resistance to authority are not defined. But how is it possible that this should be done by any ethical system? The utmost that can be done is to lay down some unerring standard by which individual cases can be measured as they arise. There must be an intellectual element in all moral action, or rather "a nice combination, an even balance between mental keen-

ness and moral emotion." To decide all the difficult questions arising out of the relations between rulers and their subjects or nations and nations would require a more voluminous work than the nine tomes of Liguori or the ponderous folios of Sanchez. But it would argue singular audacity to assert that any safer guide could be found to the solution of such problems than the Christian principle of love.

It is further objected that, "on the most essential questions of private and family right," decisions are given which "are nothing but seeds of pernicious errors." By this Mr Newman means that wives and children are placed in undue subjection to husbands and fathers; and that slaves are advised to remain in their servile condition. With reference to the first charge it may be admitted that Christian apologists have laid themselves open to attack by unguarded assertions. They have looked upon the degraded condition in which women have been in the majority of heathen nations and then upon the far more just position assigned them in Christian countries; and they have attributed the difference entirely to the elevating influence of the Gospel. But in doing so they have gone beyond what facts will warrant[1]. "It is not true that women were not honoured in the old world." If in the historic times of Greece their posi-

[1] Even Mr Robertson appears, in what he has said upon this subject, to have gone beyond what the evidence of history would justify. See *Sermons*, II. xviii. "The Glory of the Virgin-Mother."

tion was one of inferiority[1], there are numberless facts which bear witness to the reverence which was paid to them at Rome. "It is dishonest to overlook these facts, and, being dishonest, it is unchristian[2]." We may go farther, and say that when at the time of the Advent this noble reverence had almost died out from among men, it was not the teaching of the Christian apostles which alone or even chiefly revived it. St Paul's directions to his converts recognize the existing state of feeling, and do not attempt rudely to uproot it. God had other work for the first preachers of the Gospel to do, than to revolutionize the ideas of society upon this point; and other instruments already prepared for the development of the higher conceptions so needful for the progress of the world. The great Teutonic nation had preserved in the forests of their father-land a reverence for women, a sense of the sacredness of the family ties, that moved the admiration of the Roman moralist and historian[3]. And when the purifying flood had swept over the decaying empire and the stagnant Church, one of the fairest of the aftergrowths was the spirit of chivalry. All the subsequent corruptions of civilization have not succeeded in destroying the results of this wave of Teuton manliness and faith in goodness. But while this aspect of the question seems to have been too much

[1] Thuc. II. 45; Aesch. *Ag.* 611.
[2] Maurice, *Epistles of St John*, p. 335.
[3] Tac. *Germ.* II. 8, 18, 19.

neglected, it can be as little denied, I think, that this reverence for the womanly qualities and virtues was a legitimate development of the principles of Christian ethics, and has been greatly supported by them. In the first place the universal comprehensiveness of the Christian doctrines did not allow of any distinctions of sex in theory, whatever might be found needful in practice. The spiritual needs, experience and destiny of the man and the woman are precisely identical. There is nothing of the proud exclusiveness which left one sex entirely out of the consolations and the elevating influence of philosophy. The *θεωρία* of Aristotle, the *ἀταραξία* of Epictetus, were alike impossible to those whose duties lay amid the humbler concerns of daily life, whose charm resided in their susceptibility to all tender and graceful emotions. But in the teaching of the Gospel the same strait gate must be passed by all, the same narrow way must be trodden by all, the same eternal home is opened to all. "In Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female." It took some time for the seed thus sown to germinate. Its fruit indeed has never come to maturity in any nation where the Teutonic influence has been unknown. But the seed was there, and its growth was greatly fostered by a second fact of vast importance. "Before Christ came the heathen had counted for Divine the legislative wisdom of the man, manly strength, manly truth, manly justice, manly courage; the Life

and the Cross of Christ shed a splendour from heaven upon a new and till then unheard-of order of heroism, —that which may be called the feminine order, meekness, endurance, long-suffering, the passive strength of martyrdom[1]." Not that these alone were taught to the exclusion of the robuster virtues; to assert that were to import a tone of effeminacy into Christian ethics utterly alien to it, and to do grievous dishonour to the example of the King of men. But on these, as on the long latent elements of a perfect virtue, the greater stress was naturally laid. They were taught with the greater earnestness; their God-like beauty was the more constantly proclaimed; and so it could not fail to come to pass that the sex in which these graces are found in the greatest frequency and the fullest development should win by degrees the tender and reverent regard which is most just for itself, and most beneficent for man. We see then how Christian ethics, not by a rash assault upon the social arrangements of the time, but by the gentle, never-ceasing influence of broad and enlightened principles, has gradually brought about the change from which so much of the grace of our present civilization arises. It were easy to show, if it would not lead us too far from the immediate subject in hand, how far more true to nature and wholesome in its effects, is the Christian conception of the relation

[1] Robertson, *Sermons*, Vol. II. xix. ad init.

between the sexes than the extravagant adulation of the latest phase of unchristian philosophy[1].

Mr Newman further objects that St Paul teaches chastity "only as a spiritual and transcendental duty, binding therefore on the saints, but not on common men." But what is this but a distortion of the fact that St Paul bases morality on the only sure foundation, the relation of humanity as redeemed to its living Head? It is true that his arguments in support of a pure and virtuous life are drawn from this relation. But admitting this, what follows but that it was his opinion (an opinion which the experience of eighteen centuries has abundantly confirmed) that such arguments were the strongest that could possibly be used to Christians? Had he been addressing heathens, we do not know with certainty what motives to purity he would have brought forward. But his ethics are essentially Christian ethics; and it would be strange indeed if he consented to waive the vantage-ground given him as a Christian teacher, that his precepts might be of force with those who rejected the conceptions on which they were founded.

Mr Newman, strangely enough for such an enthusiastic opponent of slavery, finds no discouragement of it in the New Testament. He says, indeed, "I do not admit the thought that any leading Christian teacher approved the institution." But he maintains

[1] Mill's *Comte and Positivism*, p. 158.

that the apostles cannot have discerned the essential injustice of it, or they *must* have given other precepts to masters. The reasons for the tone of the apostles on this subject have been stated so frequently and so forcibly that it is hard to see how any one, whose moral perceptions have not been utterly blunted by self-interest, can fail to be convinced by them[1]. They can hardly be better stated than in a passage from Dr Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science* quoted by Mr Goldwin Smith: "The very course which the Gospel takes upon this subject seems to have been the only one that could have been taken in order to effect the universal abolition of slavery. The Gospel was designed, not for one race or for one time, but for all races and for all times. It looked not at the abolition of this form of evil for that age alone, but for its universal abolition. Hence the important object of its author was to gain it a lodgment in every part of the known world, so that by its universal diffusion among all classes of society it might quietly and peacefully modify and subdue the evil passions of men, and thus without violence work a revolution in the whole mass of mankind. In this manner alone could its object, a universal moral revolution, have been accomplished. For if it had forbidden the *evil* instead of subverting the *principle;* if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery and taught slaves to

[1] See Mr Goldwin Smith's pamphlet, *Does the Bible sanction American Slavery?* pp. 54—60.

resist the oppression of their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world. Its announcement would have been the signal of servile war, and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of universal bloodshed. The fact that under these circumstances the Gospel does not *forbid* slavery, affords no reason to suppose that it does not mean to prohibit it, much less does it afford ground for belief that Jesus Christ intended to authorize it[1]."

The last objection that Mr Newman makes is that the desire for knowledge and the love of beauty are instincts which are always regarded as "illegitimate, and to be simply extinguished." Here again it must be admitted that the perversions of the doctrine of the Bible by Christian teachers have given some apparent standing ground for the attacks of the sceptic. The human mind has rarely been broad enough to take in the whole of the meaning of the word of God, or to accept all the lessons that it has for us. When the thoughts of men have been called by the needs and the controversies of the time to one great truth, it has constantly happened that another which is complemental to it has been thrown into the background or lost sight of altogether. It has been so pre-eminently with the true idea of what have been often

[1] Ib. p. 58.

called carnal wisdom and accomplishments. Men engaged in a stern struggle with the allurements of the pomps and vanities of the world, have thought themselves bound to renounce and abjure everything that would appear to lead them into temptation from this source. This was the case to a great extent with the early Christians, as we may see from the necessity which Clement of Alexandria and Basil the Great found to combat some of its extreme developments. St Bernard, in his earnest protest against the luxury and vice of his own time, uses language to which his latest biographer finds a parallel in the following words from Carlyle's latter-day pamphlets, "'May the devil fly away with the fine arts,' exclaimed confidentially once in my hearing one of our most distinguished public men, a sentiment that often recurs to me. I perceive too well how true it is in our own case. A public man intent on any real business does, I suppose, find the fine arts rather imaginary, feels them to be a pretentious nothingness, a confused superfluity and nuisance purchased with cost, what he in brief language denominates a bore[1]." It was the case very much with the early Puritans, though far less so than is usually imagined[2]. They felt that they had a fierce battle to fight in the world and they kept themselves in severest training for it, flinging off

[1] Morison's *St Bernard.*

[2] Skeats' *History of Free Churches*, pp. 63—66. Kingsley's *Miscellanies*, Vol. II. "Plays and Puritans."

everything that they felt might hamper or entangle them. "It made them splendid men for the crisis—spare, stern, resolute, with moral muscles tough as wire,"...But we may say reverently of the Puritan, "it is magnificent, but it is not life[1];" and the blighting reaction that set in shewed that this was not the way in which God meant His children to look out upon the world. Yet if the most earnest reformers in every age have regarded art as a matter of little importance in comparison with an elevated moral and spiritual life, and often indeed as a hindrance to it, we cannot wonder that the greatest and most earnest reformers that the world has ever seen appeared at least to sanction this view. Again, we must not forget that "it was no more possible to cultivate any branch of art, whilst art, the great seducer of Greece, was at the service of paganism[2]." But what is the aim of all the Christian's discipline and toil on earth? Nothing less than to be perfect even as his Father in heaven is perfect, to present himself, body, soul, and spirit, each cultured to the highest state, a living sacrifice to Him. Wherein the perfection of the spirit consisted, the duties of faith, hope, love, obedience, humility and purity He deigned to teach, because the efforts of men to learn it for themselves had failed. Of the perfection of the body and the mind there was need to

[1] *Home Life*, by Mr Baldwin Brown, p. 174.

[2] Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles*, II. p. 265.

say much less, for the gymnasts, the artists, the poets, the philosophers of Hellas, had already done the work which He had given them in this department. Those to whom St Paul wrote had before their eyes the master-pieces of Pheidias and Praxiteles: the culture of the schools was familiar to them; they needed no instruction in the charms of knowledge or of beauty: but what they did need was precisely the teaching that he brought them: "Win all the perfect development of body, all the rich stores of learning that you may; but not for pride or pleasure merely, but that you may lay it all at the feet of Him who has redeemed you, which is your reasonable service." The full meaning of his teaching may have been often obscured by Manichæan heresies or Puritan narrowness: but the most enlightened Christian consciousness has not failed to interpret aright the meaning of the words "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come[1]." The highest work in art, the noblest products in literature, have proceeded from those who felt their

[1] See Pressensé, II. p. 268. "La religion du Christ s'est contentée de poser les principes qui devaient renouveler l'État; elle a agit sur l'art de la même manière. Si elle s'est tenu à l'écart de ces deux sphéres de l'activité humaine pendant l'âge apostolique, et les siècles suivants, elle a travaillé d'autant plus efficacement à leur transformation. . . . . En produisant un ideal nouveau à la fois humain et celeste, le Christianisme a frayé les voies à un art vraiment Chrétien, substituant à la sereine et insensible beauté du marbre Grec, la beauté plus interieur et plus touchante, de ces types immortels, qu'ont enfantés les grands artistes inspirés de l'Evangile."

profession to be a vocation. And we have been taught of late, in words of surpassing beauty and power, that of all which has grown up into majesty and grace beneath the hands of men, the fairest is that which has arisen in the light of the lamp of sacrifice[1]. And "sacrifice ought to seem *more rational* and easier to the Christian than to the non-Christian[2]."

Here again we must admit that it needed the experience of centuries to read the full meaning that lay in some of the words of the apostles and their Lord. And we may not have read it all yet. On this as on many yet higher things we may find that "the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His holy Word." But the one thing that we care most earnestly to maintain is, that all the desire for knowledge that shall ennoble the mind, make industry more fruitful and enhance the welfare of mankind, all the love for beauty that makes the glories of earth food for perpetual joy, is implicitly rendered imperative on all who would reach the standard of Christian ethics[3].

[1] Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture.*

[2] Davies's *Morality according to the Lord's Supper*, p. 54.

[3] It may not be out of place to append a passage from the latest work of one of the most eloquent of German divines :—

"Culture and Christianity belong to each other like light and warmth. Culture gives light to religion, religion warmth to culture. Both work for the same end: the development of all human powers in the service of the eternal ideas. For the powers of man can only find their highest application if they strive after the ideal of perfection. To work together with all the instruments of science and art that our time

The Christian Church has often been attacked of late[1] for its neglect of the great doctrine of the communion of nations; but it does not fall within my province now to discuss this subject. For if there be any truth in the charge, and it would be hard to deny that there is some, it is because the Church has fallen so lamentably short of the standard set up for it in the commandments of her Head. "If the obligations of humanity between different races of men have indeed to be brought before us as a discovery of our age, why have we been for so many generations professing to be Catholic Christians[2]?" The enthusiastic and cosmopolitan philanthropy of some of the modern Positivists may be a striking contrast to the selfish and narrow exclusiveness of many so-called Christians; but all

affords us consciously and resolutely for the highest goods, for truth and justice, for faith and virtue, for country and mankind, in the Here to grasp already the Beyond, in the earthly already to see and to enjoy the heavenly—the unison of Christianity and culture helps us to do all this. Contempt of the world appears to a stage of culture that still is extant, the highest triumph of Christianity. We know better. Knowledge of the world, rule of the world, enjoyment of the world in the purest and most spiritual sense of the word is the highest aim for the man and the Christian of the future. We wish for a Christianity that takes its stand on the summit of the development of culture, and a culture that is penetrated through and through with the fulness and the warmth of the Christian spirit." *Brennende Fragen in der Kirche der Gegenwart*, by Dr Schenkel, Professor of Theology at Heidelberg, &c. pp. 35, 36.

[1] E. g. *Essays on International Policy*, pp. 220, 221 (Prof. Beesly's Essay).

[2] Davies, *op. cit.* p. 88. See generally pp. 86—93.

their attacks upon the conduct of its professors can do nothing to mar the perfection of the canons of Christian ethics.

We have thus considered briefly, though I trust not inadequately, the objections that have been made of late by two writers of distinguished ability and typical position against the perfection of Christian morality. If the arguments brought forward in reply have been sound, we are able to assert, in spite of the protest that misconceptions have raised against such a tenet, that one characteristic which distinguishes Christian from Pagan ethics is their unblemished perfection and completeness. Christianity supplies to man in every condition of life principles which were calculated to mould and fashion him into a model of all that his heart has recognized as purest and best. And where the application of these principles might have been doubtful or likely to be mistaken, it has supplemented them by specific precepts. It has based these on the fullest recognition of the laws of his spiritual being, and the circumstances that condition it. It remains to consider what were the motives which it prescribed for action, and what has been their success.

Tho' the Roman eagle shadow thee,
tho' the gathering enemy narrow thee,
Thou shalt wax, and he shall dwindle,
thou shalt be the mighty one yet!
Thine the liberty, thine the glory,
thine the deeds to be celebrated...
Thine the North and thine the South,
and thine the battle-thunder of God.

TENNYSON.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS—THEIR POWER.

Pagan ethics marked by weakness—Christian ethics by power—The moral despair of the world at the time of the Advent—The vigorous life of the early Christians—appealed to by apologists—still the surest ground of faith—Christ the power of Christian ethics.

"THE virtue of Paganism was strength; the virtue of Christianity was obedience[1]." This is much more than a 'guess at truth;' it is the judgment of a ripe scholar and a learned theologian on a subject on which his life-long studies gave him a right to speak with authority. And yet perhaps there is nothing which affords a more striking illustration than does the distinction between Paganism and Christianity of the law our Saviour enunciated when he said, "Whosoever desires to save his life, shall lose it;

[1] *Guesses at Truth*, p. 1.

but whosoever loses his life for my sake shall find it." For the one prevailing characteristic of Pagan morality is its weakness, of Christian morality its strength. The one issues in the moan, "video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor:" the other in the jubilant cry, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In studying the moral life of the nations of the world at the epoch of the Advent, there is nothing which strikes us so forcibly as the sense of powerlessness. Beautiful sayings abound in the literature of the time, and the enemies of the faith have sedulously gathered them with a view of showing that the Gospel was needless[1]. But clearer conceptions of a standard that might be attained by men did but serve to show how utterly, how hopelessly they failed to reach it. Life seemed poisoned at its very springs. It has been well said that with God, hope, and to-morrow, a man is never vanquished in the battle with the world. But the only God in whom the Romans of those days believed very earnestly was the majesty of Rome embodied in the Emperor[2].

[1] Denis, *Histoire des Théories*, &c. II. 55—218.

[2] "With what eagerness did the Roman world hurry to invoke the deified Augustus; and in this rivalry, common to cities and to individuals, there was not merely *lâche* flattery involved, but also the desire of having in Heaven a Mediator and Protector for the Empire, a God who had been Himself man, and had but a short time before been in visible converse with man. . . . the world in its decrepitude had once again produced a God, and his worship was in principle the only one spread throughout the whole empire and really a universal one." Döllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, II. p. 287 (E. T.).

And when he was a Caius, a Claudius, or a Nero, hope was utterly gone. Those who have read with the clearest eye the history of Tiberius Caesar have seen in the foul orgies that disgraced his later years, not the unrestrained indulgence of imperious sensual passions, but something far worse, a man of supreme ability for rule, possessed with profound contempt for his subjects, deliberately turning aside from the task of governing the world in utter weariness and despair, and choosing the vilest indulgences of lust as the only pleasures worth living for. The age was worthy of its ruler. "Never did men live under such a crushing sense of degradation, never did they look back with more bitter regret, never were the vices that spring out of despair so rife, never was sensuality cultivated so methodically, never did poetry curdle so readily into satire, never was genius so much soured by cynicism, and never was calumny so gross, or so abundant, or so readily believed[1]." The picture of the social and moral state of the Romans at this time drawn by Döllinger[2], and filled in with the details which his immense erudition supplies in abundance, is dark and dreary with the hues of death. The evils that arise from luxury, the evils whose source is tyranny, the abuses inseparable from an extensive system of slavery, and, worst of all, the corruptions that always accompany a lower morality of women,

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 132.

[2] Döllinger, *Gentile and Jew*, II. 248—290.

all united to complete the degradation and the misery of the nation. The popular religions were either utterly impotent to check the wide-spread and rapidly growing vice, or even tended greatly to foster it[1]. The only philosophy that had any influence was the philosophy of despair[2]. The great historian of the time has learnt to regard the life of man as the mock and plaything of the gods, or rather of destiny[3]; and even the bitterness of the Stoic satirist fails to touch us with so profound a sense of the melancholy with which the most elevated spirits of the time looked on the world around them, as that which we derive from the whole tone and colour of his narrative. The most impressive treatise on "The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation" is to be found in the *Annals* of Tacitus; the most striking commentary on it in the *Satires* of Persius and Juvenal. "The heart of the Roman world was devoured by *ennui*. 'It was,' Seneca says, 'like the hero of Homer, who kept sometimes sitting and sometimes standing in the restlessness of his malady.' It was sick, not only from the shocks it had received, but from a profound disgust at all things.....Crime alone could excite sensation, and, as Tacitus says, by the greatness of the iniquity is measured the height of the

[1] Döllinger, II. 193—199. [2] See above, p. 70.

[3] "Quanto plura recentium seu veterum revolvo tanto magis ludibria rerum humanarum cunctis in negotiis observantur." *Annal.* III. 18; cf. XVI. 16.

pleasure. The same author mentions a suicide from no other motive than disgust at living in such a time. This suicide may symbolise the moral suicide of a whole world[1]." Nor was this aspect of gloom a transient one; it lasted far into the following century: "Few books leave a profounder impression of melancholy than the commentaries of the good Aurelius... He is hopeless because the age is hopeless[2]." The full force of the words of one of their leading philosophers was felt most keenly: "Nemo per se satis valet ut emergat; oportet manum aliquis porrigat[3]." But that hand was nowhere seen; and the Pagan morality that was based on a proud assertion of strength ended by confessing its utter and miserable weakness.

But meanwhile in one of the remotest limbs of the sick and paralysed empire had begun a stirring as of life. A doctrine had been proclaimed among their own countrymen first, and afterwards to the world at large, by a few Galilaean fishermen, about which the minds of men were much divided. Some hailed it with eager wonder as a message from the heavenly world, others scoffed at it as a *prava et immodica superstitio*. But its one broad characteristic which friends and foes were alike compelled to recognize was *power*[4]. Not only in those of splendid genius and

[1] Pressensé, *Histoire*, &c. I. 213.
[2] Merivale, VIII. p. 568 (new ed.).
[3] Seneca, *Ep.* 52.
[4] See Mr Baldwin Brown's *Divine Life in Man*, Sermon IV.

exalted enthusiasm. It was preeminently conspicuous in them. It was not given to all, of course, to find, like St Paul, in their faith a lever to move the world. But to the poorest, the weakest, the lowliest, some draught was given from the same quickening spring. They had been moaning forth the inarticulate longing which one of our own days has put into words:—

> 'Tis life, not death for which I pant,
> 'Tis life whereof my nerves are scant,
> More life, and fuller that I want.

And the Eternal Life which was with the Father was manifested to them, and in that Life they lived. Morality was no longer a cold and heartless obedience to the laws which the reason had approved. It was a passionate life-struggle after likeness to the Being whose love was the strongest emotion in their nature. It was a struggle no longer hopeless; for the Incarnation had taught "that the interest of God and the interest of humanity, the hope of God and the hope of humanity, the life of God and the life of humanity, were one[1]." Then the world saw a spectacle which it had never beheld before, which it has never been wholly deprived of since[2]. Poor unlettered men were seen to reach a height of moral dignity and beauty which the most cultured philosophers had failed to win. With many failings incident to those who had just been drawn from the moral slough of the world

[1] *Divine Life in Man*, p. 116. [2] *Ecce Homo*, p. 171.

around them, with very much ignorance arising from their narrow cultivation and low development, there was yet the glow of conscious life inspiring all their thoughts and actions.

This the Pagans around them could not fail to notice; and to this the Christian apologists loved to appeal as the surest proof of the divine origin of their religion. Baur may have gone too far when he writes:—"Everything that claims the name of religion can only prove the divine nature of its source and principle by the moral effects which it produces, by the moral strength and energy which it awakens in its disciples[1]." For this seems to savour somewhat of "the conception of the usual indifferentism and the so-called illumination of the eighteenth century, that morality of itself is the true religion, that to be moral is to be pious, that outside virtue there is no piety, and that the latter is not intimately connected with the former but identical with it[2]." But the appeal to the moral conscience of men at least affords a most valuable support to the appeal which a religion makes to their spiritual conscience. All can feel the force of the words of Minucius Felix: "Quod in dies nostri numerus augetur non est crimen erroris sed testimonium laudis: nam in pulcro genere vivendi et perstat et perseverat suus, et accrescit alienus. Sic nos denique non notaculo corporis, ut putatis, sed innocentiae

[1] *Geschichte des Christenthum*, I. 453.
[2] Wuttke, *Christliche Sittenlehre*, I. 315.

ac modestiae signo facile dignoscimus. Sic mutuo, quod doletis, amore diligimus, quoniam odisse non novimus; sic nos, quod invidetis, fratres vocamus, ut unius Dei parentis homines, ut consortes fidei, ut spei coheredes[1]." With what noble pride does Athenagoras contrast the effects of the teaching of philosophers with those that follow from the Christian faith! "Among us," he writes, "you will find uneducated persons, and artisans, and old women, who if they are unable to prove in words the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth. They do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works; when struck, they do not strike again; when robbed, they do not go to law; they give to those that ask of them, and love their neighbours as themselves[2]." Granted that all these precepts had been known before to Pagan teachers, at what time could any one of them have appealed thus boldly to the character of his followers to show their power? If we turn to the earliest of all the apologists, Justin Martyr, we find like passages in abundance, for instance—"We who formerly delighted in fornication now embrace chastity; we who formerly used magical arts dedicate ourselves to the good and un-begotten God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and of possessions now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate

[1] *Octavius*, c. 31. [2] *Apol.* c. 11.

to every one in need. We who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not use a common hearth and fire with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all[1]." Similar passages might be multiplied almost indefinitely[2]: but it is needless to accumulate proof of that which is patent on every page of early Christian history. The annals of the primitive Church that remain to us in the Acts of the Apostles are full of this feeling of conscious power and life. The Church felt and the world felt too that strength from on high had entered into it; that hope had no longer fled to its heavenly home, but that it had been brought back to earth in the Incarnation. "To St Paul and the first Christians the law became no longer a stern commandment, standing outside of them, threatening them from above, but a warm law of love within them; not only a higher discernment of the good, but a new and marvellous power to do it cheerfully and with joy[3]." Thus that which is the basis of Christian faith is equally the main-spring of Chris-

[1] *Apol. Prim.* c. xiv.

[2] Cf. Von Hirscher, I. pp. 35, 36; Pressensé, II. 264—281.

[3] Prof. Shairp's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 423.

tian ethics. If the Christian system of morality is not only more scientific, more certain, more universal, more perfect, but also more powerful than the doctrines of the Pagan philosophers, it was because it was founded on that which is meant by the word Immanuel, "God with us." "In the department of morals philosophy nobly played her part; but perhaps her success in this respect more clearly displayed her inefficiency[1]." A philosopher might have said to his followers: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." But he could not have added as a Christian teacher would have added to his converts: "think on these things, for so you shall have a sure and certain hope of a glorious immortality, so you shall become the children of your Father which is in Heaven; think on these things, for thus shall the mind be in you, which was in Christ, your Redeemer and your Life; think on these things, for the Holy Spirit the Comforter is ever bringing them back into your hearts with power." And the difference in power between the philosopher and the apostle was shown in the regeneration of a dying world. On this one fact the simple believer may

[1] Milman's *History of Christianity*, I. p. 35 (new ed.).

surely rest. The wisdom of the wisest, the example of the purest and kindliest had been lavished in vain on men that felt themselves in each generation sinking deeper and deeper into a living death that they themselves abhorred:

> Aetas parentum peior avis tulit
> nos nequiores, mox daturos
> progeniem vitiosiorem:

such was the wail that was rising to heaven from every quarter of the Roman world, when Christ was born in Bethlehem. And from the hour when first He gathered around Him a company of Galilaean peasants, men felt and knew that life from above was stirring among them. The light of the Sun of Righteousness had risen on the night of the world, and its radiance could not be hidden. The strength and hope and gladness of those on whom it shone came before the eyes of men, and they asked in wonder what this new life might mean. And even now, as we read the pages on which are inscribed the annals of the early church, we find the stream of Christian life that has now made eighteen centuries glad leaping into light with a bounding freshness that forces us to ask from whence it springs. Many a philosopher has attempted to tell us; but the one sufficient answer is that which one of those days himself has left us:—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

To this we again come back. Christ is not only the source of the Christian code; He is the fountain of its strength. We have seen how the method of Christian ethics gains width and universality from its foundation in the will of a Person. In precisely the same way, its power is drawn from faith and love towards Him. What the reasonings of philosophers, the warnings of conscience, the pangs of remorse had been found utterly incapable of effecting, was done by the mighty drawing of "the cords of love and the bands of a man;" and Christ became to the world "the wisdom and the *power* of God." We may recognize gladly and gratefully the earnestness with which Plato and Zeno, Epictetus and Aurelius, taught the duty of living for higher and nobler ends than the joys of time and sense; but reason and history alike bring us back to the question of the holy Apostle: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that JESUS is the Son of God."

THE END.

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AUGUSTUS S. WILKINS, M.A.,

Professor of Latin in Owens College, Manchester.

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